

FOLK-SONGS OF THE MAIKAL HILLS

also by Verrier Elwin

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The Muria and their Ghotul (O.U.P.) *In the press*

WITH SHAMRAO HIVALE

Songs of the Forest (ALLEN & UNWIN)

SPECIMENS OF
THE ORAL LITERATURE OF MIDDLE INDIA

FOLK-SONGS
OF THE
MAIKAL HILLS

VERRIER ELWIN
&
SHAMRAO HIVALE



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INTRODUCTION

THIS second volume of *Specimens of the Oral Literature of Mahakoshal* contains a selection of the folk-songs of the aboriginal population of the Maikal Hills. These lovely mountains at the extreme eastern end of the Satpura Range, traditionally the home of some of the most famous Hindu Rishis, run from Amarkantak, source of the sacred Narmada river, through south-east Mandla into the Sailekri forests of Balaghat. Still wild, remote and lonely, the hills are inhabited by a largely aboriginal population, Baiga and Gond, Agaria and Dhoba, Pardhan and Bharia. We have confined ourselves for the present to the aboriginal poetry of the area, for this forms a clearly defined block of literature still little influenced from outside, still preserving much of its freshness and beauty.

It is possible to speak of this poetry as a whole. In the Maikal Hills all the different tribes mix together and share each other's recreations. The remotest Baiga villages do indeed have their own special movements in their dances and their own emphasis in their songs. The Agaria have their own technical songs about their craft. The Baiga still wistfully sing, as the Gond do not, about their traditional axe-cultivation. The Pardhan have their own long narrative poems of almost epic character which are not shared by the other tribes. But the bulk of the song is common to all and the variations arise only as one moves from place to place. The songs printed here can all, with a few exceptions noted in the text, be called Gond songs; but they could equally well be called Pardhan. We have included a few Baiga songs which are known also to the Gond. Probably the simplest way of reference would be to call them 'Gond songs' unless we have indicated otherwise.

It is generally said that anyone born in the Maikal Hills will never be content to die elsewhere, that those who have once slipped in the mud of Mandla will want to live there always. The beauty of the countryside, the charm of the climate, the friendliness of the people is reflected in the songs. Their poetry is often very beautiful both in form and content, in image and symbol. It is impossible to reproduce in a foreign tongue the often delicate artistry of the originals. But some attempt must

be made to do so before this remarkable oral literature passes from the world in face of the spread of education and the decay of the tribes.

Sometimes, of course, to foreign ears the songs appear unpoetic enough. There are many songs about the prices of things, many work tediously through the whole Table of Affinity. References to betel, bidi, turmeric, sendur, to dhoti and sari and the intimacies of underwear are not very romantic for the Occidental reader but they are full of poetic and often tender associations to the people themselves. To aborigines who are always engrossed in matters of kinship and relationship the Table of Affinity is a thing of excitement and beauty. To very poor people living on the borderline of starvation the price of things and references to food and drink, to little presents and their few cheap luxuries, are fit subjects of poetry.

Many of the songs are, of course, very difficult. Some of them seem to have developed out of the riddle, a popular form of entertainment among these people. Riddles are actually sung as dance songs during the Saila competitions. Other riddles are asked and must be answered before a bride is allowed to leave her parents' house. Many of the songs have the severely condensed form, the obscure reference and the unusual symbolism that is normally characteristic of a riddle. The task of translating is thus difficult enough; that of interpretation is impossible without a wide knowledge of the social background.

Take, for example, this Doha song—

Are are bhai re
Gaye daihān aur lāne kharsi
Ek dauki aur banāle
Tela khohābe ghursi
Hai re.

Such a song cannot be translated into English. Consider the three key-words on which in the ears of the singers its poetic merit depends. The first is *daihān*, the cows' resting-place, where the cattle gather at noon beneath shady trees in a clearing far out in the forest, and the Ahir sits by playing on his flute. You may see this scene again and again in the old Pahari paintings, and the very thought of it arouses emotion and delight in the mind of any Indian. But we have no word for this in English and practically nothing in Western life to correspond with the idea. The second important word

in the poem is *kharsi*, the dry scraps of dung which are collected by girls from the cows' resting-place and brought home for banking the fire. The sweet-smelling, clean and charming cow-dung so dear to the heart of every Indian villager is not only unfamiliar to the Western reader, but may be positively repulsive to him. When Pope wished to emphasize the miserable death of Villiers he described the scene of his suffering as being

In the worst inn's worst room, with mat half hung,
The floor of plaster and the walls of dung.

Aldous Huxley describes how profoundly impressed he had been with those walls of dung. Indeed, 'they still disturb my imagination. They express, for me, the Essential Horror.'

The third word is *ghursi*. This is an earthen bowl made, not by a potter, but by the women of the house themselves, which is filled with cow-dung scraps and lit. It smoulders slowly giving out a very fair heat and generally lasts all night. To prepare the *ghursi* is one of the most intimate services that a woman can render her husband. She puts it under the bed to keep them warm as they sleep together, and people who are too poor to afford mattresses and blankets depend greatly on their fires. The thought of the *ghursi* corresponds emotionally to ideas of firelight glowing on a loved face or flickering flames illuminating a dark cosy room in Europe.

The song, therefore, may be translated,

You go to the cow's resting-place
And bring the scraps of dung
Get a new wife
And she will prepare your *ghursi*.

Not a very satisfactory version, and certainly not one that would arouse poetic feeling in any Western reader, yet in the original the suggestion that the new wife will prepare the *ghursi* is itself an intimate and romantic thought, for to prepare the fire for the lover is to arouse the fire of love.

This example—and we might easily give scores of such songs—will serve to illustrate the difficulty of translating verses that are so intimately connected with the life of the people and the countryside. A whole commentary is needed to understand them properly.

This book therefore must be taken as a supplement. Two of the tribes whose songs we have recorded have been

exhaustively described in *The Baiga* and *The Agaria*. Our *Songs of the Forest* gives 290 songs, *The Baiga* 340 and *The Agaria* 14. These represent the cream of our collection of several thousands. In this volume we attempt to supplement the songs already published elsewhere, to discuss in more detail than hitherto their technical form and to relate them as fully as space will permit to their ethnographic background. We will not, however, repeat too much of what has already been written elsewhere.

The neglect, both by scientists and artists, of the Indian folk-song is astonishing. For a long time only religious and didactic verses were recorded. Gover admits that he dared not translate erotica, and speaks of 'a learned and estimable missionary who has been publicly condemned because he would faithfully translate a noble poem without a really impure thought in it, and was therefore compelled to commit the awful crime of likening a woman's bosom to a pomegranate.' In *The Poetry of the Orient* not a single folk-song has been anthologized. We have turned over thousands of pages of the great volumes of the Ethnographic Survey—Thurston, Risley, Enthoven, Anantakrishna Iyer, Russell and Hiralal—these are books of the dark half of the month: the light of the moon of verse does not shine through them.

Yet the songs are important, not only because the music, form and content of verse is itself part of a people's life but even more because in songs, in charms, in actually fixed and established documents we have the most authentic and unshakable witnesses to ethnographic fact. Anthropology has passed the stage when a report had only to appear in print to be accepted. Today we want to know whether the report is true. The anthropologist must not only be a detective, he must be a magistrate. In making up his mind he can have no better evidence than songs.

If you want to know the story of my life
Then listen to my Karma.

The songs are not all the evidence, but they are an important part of it. They round off and complete the picture. They are much nearer real life than are the folk-tales, for these seem to represent an escape from life rather than a reproduction of it.

Let us take one example: the tradition of domestic fidelity and the duration of marriage. Among the Muria of Bastar

State there is a very high degree of marital fidelity and out of 2000 marriages examined only 49 had ended in divorce. The songs of the Muria reflect this situation. Although they are not wanting in love interest the theme of the deserted lover and the faithless wife and husband is almost unknown. But in Mandla where in a single village examined the divorce rate was no less than 56 per cent, the songs abound with descriptions of maidens betrayed, of broken hearts and of the faithlessness of man. Indeed in Mandla the song is often used as itself an instrument of seduction, and elopements are arranged and assignations made by what we may call code messages sung in the form of Karma or Dadaria.

Again the great variety of the Bastar songs witnesses to the fullness of its undisturbed tribal life. There are songs for festivals of every kind, scores of songs to accompany children's games, songs for dancing expeditions. In Mandla, where tribal life has largely decayed, there is little variety in the types of song. Half a dozen different kinds of dance, the Jawara festival, the marriage songs, craft and children's songs compose such variety as we have.

In most of these songs, of course, verse is wedded to the dance and to some extent depends on it. But we have today the curious situation that in these hills, though the songs remain, the dance is dying out. There is now a good deal of confusion about what song should be sung to what dance, and the dance songs are already being sung by the fireside or by lover to lover in bed rather than on the public dancing-ground. There will be a melancholy interest in watching during the next twenty years how far the disappearance of the dance will alter the style and rhythm of the songs that used to be wedded to it.

For one of the most tragic things about the contact of the aboriginal with civilization is the destruction of art and culture that so frequently follows. William Morris once spoke of the danger 'that the present course of civilization would destroy the beauty of life.' Among Indian aboriginals that is not only a danger but a fact. S. C. Roy has spoken of a 'loss of interest in life' among the Birhor and Korwa, J. H. Hutton of psychical apathy and physical decline in the Andamans, J. P. Mills of the 'awful monotony of village life' and its 'unspeakable drabness' in Christianized Assam. Sometimes this destruction is caused by outsiders, by well-meaning but rather unintelligent 'uplifters' and social reformers; sometimes the evil comes from within.

India is all too full of people like Mr Pumblechook who, it will be remembered, could not see a small boy without trying to benefit him by setting him problems in mental arithmetic. The Pumblechooks of India try very hard to make the aboriginal good: they only succeed in making him dull. It is hard to convince the missionary and reformer of whatever religion that the romance and gaiety of tribal life is necessary for its preservation. An Orissa Committee has urged the abolition of the village dormitory. The American Baptist Mission in Assam has stopped the great Feasts of Merit and with them the very few occasions on which the monotony of village life is broken. Any policy of Prohibition will ultimately destroy the dancing and many of the religious festivals of the people.

More commonly movements for 'reform' appear to arise almost spontaneously. Seligman has described such mass obsessional neuroses which often take the form of new religions. In Papua five new faiths came into being 'under the stress of conflict due to white influence'. The apocalyptic message of Tokerna ordered the abolition of European utensils, luxuries and the killing of hundreds of pigs. Seligman compares this with the commands of Nongquase, the South African diviner, at whose command the Amaxosa in 1856 killed many thousands of their cattle and foretold that, when the cattle were killed, old chiefs would rise from the dead and there would be a miraculous supply of grain.

It would take a whole book to study similar mass neuroses in India, but we may illustrate their general tendency by a few examples. They are often marked by delusions of grandeur—the desire to recapture a former dignity—and by destructiveness. The Maria throw away their dancing dress, the Muria cut down thousands of trees, many tribes kill pigs and chickens. In 1924, the Ho of the Kolhan (Bihar) met at Lumpunguto and decided to stop their ancient songs and dances because 'they were looked down on by their cultured neighbours as very low and degrading', because their boys' health was damaged by late hours spent in dancing and their morals injured, and because they involved unnecessary waste of time and energy.

The destruction of beauty is always evil but never more so than when it means robbing the poorest of the poor of the few treasures that they have. The great Karma dance of the Gond is a precious and lovely thing; the Dadaria songs

alone are enough to redeem their culture from mediocrity. The Saila dance is splendid recreation and exercise. Yet all this is rapidly being destroyed by so-called reformers who leave nothing in its place except the filth of Holi and the obscenity of the marriage abuse.

But it must be remembered that this passion for the destruction of beautiful things is not confined to India. In his speech at the Sexual Reform Congress in 1929 Bernard Shaw reminded his hearers that they were not to expect that democracy would mean real freedom. Modern democracy, he said, 'has become associated with ideas of liberty because it has abolished certain methods of political oppression, and we are apt to think that what makes for liberty in one thing will make for liberty in all things'. But this is not so. The more the people at large have to do with Government the more will the intellectuals and artists have to fight for their ideas and perhaps for their lives. Bernard Shaw illustrated his point by an anecdote which is relevant to the Indian situation. Cecil Sharp was a collector of many peasant songs especially in Somerset. He began there in the rectory of the Rev C. L. Marson. 'One day they were walking in the rectory grounds near an enclosed fruit garden. Cecil Sharp heard a man on the other side of the wall singing a song, to what seemed to him to be a beautiful tune. He immediately noted it down, and said to Marson, "Who is that singing?" "He is my gardener", was the reply. Sharp insisted on finding out whether he had any more songs. He went in, full of the enthusiasm of the artist who had discovered something beautiful; and they told the man that they had heard him singing. He instantly threw down his spade, and called God to witness that he was an honest and decent man who had never sung a song in his life, and was not going to be accused of such debauchery and wickedness by any gentleman.

'They were amazed, because as members of our cultivated classes they did not understand that to the mass of the people art and beauty are nothing but forms of debauchery. They had the greatest trouble in persuading the gardener that they were both of them just as great blackguards as he was; and then he told them where they would find other songs, and undertook to introduce them to the singers.'

The moral drawn by Bernard Shaw from this story illuminates the situation in the Maikal Hills today. Slowly there is creeping over that lovely countryside the horrible

that 'Many things go towards making a national movement a living entity : the spirit of common effort, adequate organization, leaders, and very important, a common tradition. In forming a nation this national literature plays a big role. The Abbey Theatre movement, the work of Yeats and A.E. with their band of workers, nurtured the Irish fight for independence. The songs of Plunkett, himself a martyr for the Irish cause, were enshrined in the hearts of Irishmen after the successful wartime rebellion . . . It is significant that the growth of interest in the "songs of the people" is a factor in post-war development and that it coincides with the "new nationalism" and radical trends in the world today. Love of folk-lore is . . . inherent in the cultural background of the Russian Soviet Socialist Republics, because of the emphasis on everything that comes spontaneously from the people. All efforts to create a rich tradition of national culture, not a culture grafted on to the old stock by a civilization that is strange in ideas and expression, but an indigenous one that springs from the very heart of the people, must be welcomed.'

Devendra Satyarthi concludes that 'it is high time for nationalist India to arouse the imagination of our people to look upon their folk-songs as synonymous with national literature, and to call for an All-India Folk-Songs Revival Movement.

'Let us hope that the national movement of "India reborn" will soon recognize the real value of India's folk-songs, and will give impetus to writers all over the country to make an enormous collection, from the living lips of the people, of almost all the songs, ballads and all other types of folklore—the legends, folk-tales, proverbs and riddles. Folk-songs should also be sought out by our new writers and poets for the unparalleled fund of inspiration they have as the heart-beats of Mother India, as did Pushkin in Russia.'

In translating the songs we have tried to keep as near as possible to the originals in meaning, though we have frankly abandoned any attempt to reproduce the form. Eunice Tietjens, in the Introduction to her anthology *The Poetry of the Orient*, divides the translators of Oriental poetry into four principal classes. There are those who reproduce as closely as possible the rhythmic and rhyme scheme of the original, sticking as close to the sense as possible. There are then those who feel that to reproduce a form exactly is to distort it, since the ear which must receive this form is not the same ear as that for which it was written. These translate the

rhythm into one native to them, hoping thus to give the impression that the original gives to its own readers. The third type of translator is he who finding that it is very seldom possible to do justice to both form and content sticks to the content and lets the form take care of itself. He translates into free verse whatever the original form may have been. The fourth translator is he who despairing of doing justice to the original in any form whatever sets down in prose of scrupulous exactitude the precise shade of meaning as he sees it.

In India there have been few attempts like those of Louise Hammond for Chinese poetry to reproduce the exact rhyme and rhythm of the originals. Macdonell did something, but the majority of scholars belong to the second class; Powys Mathers' astonishing version of the *Chaurapanchasika* is indeed rather an interpretation than a translation. Dr and Mrs Seligman translated their Vedda songs into prose, and N. E. Parry did the same for his often beautiful Lakher songs.

A. G. Shirreff is a representative of the second type of translator. Indeed he says expressly in his introduction to *Hindi Folk-Songs* that 'in the translations which follow my aim has been to give as accurate a rendering as possible in a form which may remind English readers of folk-poetry with which they are very familiar'. He finds many resemblances between the Hindi songs of the United Provinces and English songs and ballads. Devendra Satyarthi considers that this idea of rendering songs in verse with the aim of reminding English people of their own ballads is dangerous, and he points out how Shirreff translates the word *sāri* as 'gown', and *ta yahi ranban men* as 'under the greenwood tree'. This was probably also the method of such workers as Griffith, R. C. Dutt and Sir Edwin Arnold, who have produced poems that are often beautiful in themselves, but which cannot be regarded as satisfactory translations.

W. G. Archer has laid down some admirable principles for the translation of Indian folk-poetry into English. A poem, he says, 'is a combination of certain images, certain rhythms and certain effects of music, and only if a translation could provide an exact parallel for each of these elements could it be perfect. In actual fact, a translation from a tribal language into English can parallel only one of these elements. Differences of verbal structure are so great that if parallel images are retained, the rhythms will be different. If the

rhythms are maintained, the images will suffer, while no form of English can reproduce the musical effects of Hindi, Uraon, Gondi, or Mundari. "Certain things", said Ezra Pound, "are translatable from one language to another, a tale or an image will translate; music will practically never translate." A translation becomes possible, therefore, only when there is no attempt at all at complete correspondence.

'We believe that the best solution so far reached is that of Arthur Waley. In translating from the Chinese Arthur Waley was faced with problems which are identical with those of Indian languages. His solution has been a series of versions in which the literal meaning of the translation corresponds with the literal meaning of the original. In particular, the images are never added to and never subtracted from. The poem as a system of images remains in translation what it is in the original. Instead, however, of attempting a duplication of rhyme, rhythm, or music, his versions use the rhythms and sound effects which come most naturally to the English. The original form is abandoned and instead the effort is to create a new form which is valid for a contemporary sensibility.'

This principle of not adding any new images is of very great importance. Arthur Waley himself says, 'Above all, considering images to be the soul of poetry, I have avoided either adding images of my own or suppressing those of the original.'¹ A vivid example of the danger of adding new images to a translation is seen in the works of Dryden whose translations are really remarkable original poems which have been suggested by classic models. In his famous stanza on Fortune occur the lines,

I can enjoy her while she's kind;
But when she dances in the wind,
And shakes the wings and will not stay,
I puff the prostitute away.

This is supposed to be a translation of the twenty-ninth Ode of the Third Book of Horace. But the excellent line which was so much admired by Thackeray—'I puff the prostitute away'—is represented in the original simply by the words *resigno quae dedit*. Here an entirely new image is added to the poem, for which there is no warrant in the original. Caution in this matter is all the more important when we consider the essential place that symbolism holds in village poetry.

¹ A. Waley, *170 Chinese Poems* (London, 1928), 19.

We have, therefore, followed as far as possible the example of Arthur Waley and have worked on the principles laid down by W. G. Archer, that is to say, we have avoided rhyme and have made no attempt to reproduce the form of the original. We have tried to represent the original meaning as literally as possible, within the limits of the demands of poetry, and we have been scrupulous in introducing no word or image that is unrepresented in the original.

To illustrate the different methods of translation it may be of interest to compare here versions made by Laurence Housman of songs in two of our previous collections. In *Songs of the Forest* appears the following song :

The wind and the rain are beating down.
Take shelter or your clothes will be drenched.
The rain is falling, falling.
In all my dreams I searched for you,
But I did not find even the echo of your steps.

I have built a fence by the roadside.
I have made a fence for my garden.
Where have you hidden, thief of my heart?
In all my dreams I searched for you,
But I did not find even the echo of your steps.

I have cut tall bamboos; I have cut short bamboos.
Large are the hollows of the dwarf bamboos.
The thief who crouched behind my fence has hidden in
those hollows.
In all my dreams I searched for you,
But I did not find even the echo of your steps.

This is Laurence Housman's version :

The wind and rain are beating down,
Come in, don't drown! Take shelter, do!
The rain, the rain: O, hear it beat!
In all my dreams I searched for you
But could not find one trace again,
Or hear the echo of your feet.

Between my garden and the track
I built a wall, I fenced it round,
I made it safe as holy ground.

O loved, O lost, come back, come back!
 Thief of my Heart! I search for you,
 I search, and still no footprint meet,
 Nor hear the echo of your feet.

I built my wall of tall bamboo,
 Of tall, and short, with hollow stem :
 And in the hollow where they grew
 The hidden thief lay crouched in them.
 Now all my dreams I search for you,
 And up and down the world I beat :
 Rain beating on the tall bamboo
 Has drowned the echo of your feet.

Again, in *The Baiga* appears the following :

In the midst of the river, the tree is full of leaves.
 Among the leaves, monkeys are hiding—
 They are eating the fruit that grows there.
 O when will I meet my true love
 Who will put aside the leaves,
 And pluck the oranges that grow
 So round and firm upon my tree?

Laurence Housman versified this as :

On an island in the river is a tree full of leaves;
 And deep in among them, the monkeys, little thieves,
 Come stealing the fruit which is hiding there below—
 The fruit that hangs waiting there for thee.

Oh, when will my love come, and drive away the thieves,
 And climb into the branches, and push aside the leaves,
 And pluck from their shadows the oranges that grow
 So full, and firm, and round upon my tree?

One of the greatest problems facing a collector of folk-songs is what to do with the originals. The ideal thing is of course to print the original side by side with the translation. But this has many practical disadvantages. It is difficult enough for a publisher to undertake a book of this kind in any case. If it is burdened with a large quantity of matter which not one in a hundred readers will understand, the task of publication becomes almost impossible. Then again Hindi is a language

with a phonetic script very different from our own and there is no really satisfactory way of reproducing Hindi originals, especially in their obscure dialect forms, in roman characters. Even if that were done, there cannot be more than a few dozen Occidental readers sufficiently acquainted with the dialects in which these songs are composed to read them with any pleasure, while few indeed are the Indian readers who can bear to read any Indian language printed in roman script. We have decided therefore at some personal sacrifice (for the inclusion of originals so familiar to ourselves would have given us much pleasure) to omit them in the present volume and to publish them separately in the Devanagari script for the benefit of Indian readers and of such philologists as may desire to study them. This is the method that has been adopted by W. G. Archer in his important collection of the songs and riddles of Chota Nagpur and it has the double advantage of not only guaranteeing the authenticity of the poems, but of enabling such villagers as are literate to read them for themselves.

This collection is offered as a collection of songs rather than of poems. In the first place the description is more accurate, for every verse in the book has been sung and has been neither written nor recited; and secondly we have deliberately cast our net rather widely so as to illustrate as many aspects of village life as possible. The great majority of village songs have little poetry in them, and the more primitive we get the less poetry we seem to find; Gondi, for example, does not seem to lend itself well to poetic inspiration; the Juang, whose songs are full of poetry, do not sing (though they still talk) in their ancient tongue, but use Oriya. Take one of W. V. Grigson's songs, for example, in his *Maria Gonds of Bastar*:

Aleya reloya relo
Kokoreng koreng
 Why are we not singing?
Kokoreng koreng
 Come, lads, come!
Kokoreng koreng
 This kind of song is no song,

and so on. How is any one to make a poem out of that?

Take another example, one of the first Indian folk-songs to be put into English, by Dalton who undoubtedly had the

spirit and the tongue of a true poet. This is a 'close imitation' of a song sung 'by a rockbroken stream with wooded banks, the girls on one side, the lads on the other, singing to the accompaniment of the babbling brook in true bucolic style.'

Boys

A kanchan flower bring to us
We'll listen whilst you sing to us.

GIRLS

We'll gather greens for dinner, dear!
But cannot think of singing here.

Boys

A handful that of chaff and straw,
Us boys you surely beat at jaw!

GIRLS (*pouting*)

Ah! birds that chirp and fly away!
With us you care not then to stay?

Boys (*amorous*)

Yes, yes, we've caught some pretty fish,
To part, dear girls, is not our wish.

GIRLS (*pleased*)

The clouds disperse, the day looks fair,
Come back then lads our homes to share.

Boys

No! by the bar tree blossom! But
You come with us and share our hut.

GIRLS

The birds sing merrily, we agree
To leave pa ma and go with thee.

This is not really, as it sounds at first, something for *The Stuffed Owl*; it is an attempt to reproduce the way the boys and girls improvise songs at one another. Most of the Dadaria

in Mandla are of very poor quality; they are improvisations and they are usually rhymed—and rhyme quickly introduces a cheapness and vulgarity into village song. But the scientist must preserve the cheap and vulgar as well as the high and beautiful.

The music of the songs was recorded by Walter Kaufmann in 1940 and an account of them was published by him in *The Musical Quarterly* for the following year, to which a valuable note was added by Curt Sachs, author of *The World History of Dance*.

Sachs refers to these Gond melodies as an 'important collection' and describes their 'music as simple and primitive as any tribal songs in the six continents. The typical Dadaria is opened by a stereotyped phrase (as in Breton bagpipe tunes), which begins just below the final of the scale and ascends, without halftones, the distance of a fifth; the melody remains at this level for a while—sometimes as a mere psalmodic repercussion—and descends stepwise the distance of a fourth to the final; a closing episode alternates the final with its upper neighbour. The range of a Dadaria is from four to six degrees, and its skeleton is the interval of a fourth. Several Dadaria are without halftones, while others are diatonic, mostly in the Lydian mode. Thus they represent an alloy of anhemitonic and diatonic, of chant and actual melody, both ascending and descending, in modal tetrachords.

'The Karma songs are more archaic; one of them has only two tones, which lie a second apart, as have the melodies of certain Patagonian tribes and of the Vedda in the interior of Ceylon. This two-tone style is retained as a nucleus even when some other notes are introduced, and it is a fascinating experience to study the biological evolution from No. 17, through No. 17a, to No. 20, an evolution that presents us with a growth in two directions by introducing both halftones and tetrachordal structure. Moreover, these melodies, so strikingly similar to each other that we are tempted to take them for variants only, make clear how the high civilizations, drawing from the songs of the tribes that they had absorbed, came to the conception of melodic patterns, of ragas and maqamat, of Dorian, Phrygian, and Lydian'.¹

¹ Walter Kaufmann, 'Folk Songs of the Gond and Baiga', *The Musical Quarterly* (New York, 1941), xxvii, 280-88. In this book, Kaufmann's No. 17 is No. 11 and his No. 20 is No. 14. No. 17a is not printed here.

When we approach the pleasant task of acknowledging our obligations to our friends, before all others we must admit our debt to W. G. Archer. Of his beautiful and important book, *The Blue Grove*, he once wrote to us that 'but for *Songs of the Forest* it is certain that *The Blue Grove* would never have been written'. It is equally certain that but for *The Blue Grove* and its successor, *The Wedding of the Writers*, the present volume would not have been written either. The perfection of his technique, the beauty of his translations, the subtlety of his interpretation, the range of his knowledge, his devotion to Indian art and culture has been a continual inspiration and challenge to us in our task.

We must also acknowledge the devotion and inspiration of Devendra Satyarthi to Indian folk-literature. This writer, who has declared that the opinion of Andrew Fletcher, that a nation's ballads are more important than its laws, has touched his dreams, has wandered all over India and made a vast collection of village-songs. 'I have not been able', he says, 'to express my love for my country in political activity, nor could any form of social service suit me. I simply took to the songs of my people. The colour, fire, and sparkle of the peasants' poetry made an interesting story for me. A nation reborn must be inspired by its folk-songs.'

In the long labour of collection, translation and interpretation, which has now continued for ten years, we have had many helpers. Sunderlal Baghel and Sunderlal Narbada Prasad have helped us to collect songs from the beginning. Sounu Pardhan and his wife Phula, both of them poets, have been invaluable in interpretation. Baigin Gondin, Kachari Pardhanin and Ahaliya Pankin have thrown light on obscure references which only a woman's mind could explain and have themselves given many songs. Haricharan Syam, a Pardhan youth, Chandu, Jantri, Ram Pratap Baghel, Kartik Parteti and others have also helped. To Kosi Elwin a special debt is due for the singing of many beautiful songs.

Mr Rambharose Agarwal has been indefatigable in his assistance. He has collected many songs for us, and his advice and his unrivalled knowledge of Mandla District has always been at our disposal.

Part of the expenses of the preparation of this book were covered by a research grant from Merton College. Its publication was assisted by the Government of the Central

Provinces and Berar. Little, however, would have been possible without the support and friendship of Mr J. R. D. Tata and Mr J. P. Patel and of our friends (who must remain anonymous) on the staff of the Oxford University Press. To the Diocesan Press, Madras, belongs the credit of printing this and its companion volume with speed and precision at a time of unparalleled difficulty in the history of book-production.

From the day we first settled in aboriginal company, we have been impressed with the fact that the Indian 'primitive'—for all his material poverty and lack of conventional learning—is not to be pitied and 'uplifted', but rather to be respected and admired. Nothing in his life is more admirable than his flair for poetry, his sense of rhythm, his love of art. We believe that if he would be rightly guided, he would not be ashamed of these great things and that if he would employ them more enthusiastically he would soon win an honoured place in the social structure of modern India.

PATANGARH VILLAGE
MANDLA DISTRICT
INDIA

VERRIER ELWIN
SHAMRAO HIVALE

1 May 1944

NOTE

To make this collection as representative as possible, twenty-two songs have been reprinted from *The Baiga* (John Murray, 1939), nine from *Songs of the Forest* (Allen and Unwin, 1936), three from *The Agaria* (Oxford University Press, 1942), and one from *Phulmat of the Hills* (John Murray, 1937). Twenty of the Pardhan songs were printed in *Man in India*, Vol. xxii, and twelve of the Dadaria now appearing in this volume in *Man in India*, Vol. xxiii. The rest of the six hundred and nineteen songs have not been printed before.

THE KARMA SONGS

THE KARMA DANCE

DANCES with the name of Karam or Karma have been recorded for many different tribes; indeed Dalton speaks of the Karam dance as 'universal'.¹ He himself describes it as danced by the Kisan or Nagesar,² by the Koiri,³ and by the Kol of Chota Nagpur who cut a branch of the karam tree, plant it in the dancing-ground and dance round it—a ceremony apparently intended to ensure the fertility of the crops.⁴ The Majhwar dance the Karma at the beginning and end of the rains⁵ and the Korwa dance it in autumn to benefit the crops and when rain is deficient.⁶

In Chota Nagpur and Orissa, the dance is associated with a festival that resembles the Jawara and Bhajli ceremonies of Mandla. The Chota Nagpur tribes observe the festival in August, in the middle of the rains, when the rice is still standing, between transplanting and harvest;⁷ the Bhuiya keep it in late October or November, after the rice has been cut but before it has been threshed.⁸

Dalton describes the observance of the festival among the Uraon. After fasting, on the evening of the first day, 'a party of young people, of both sexes, proceed to the forest, and cut a young Karma tree or the branch of one, bearing which they return in triumph—dancing, and singing, and beating drums—and plant it in the middle of the Akhra (dancing-ground). After the performance of a sacrifice to the Karma Deota by the Pahn, the villagers feast, and the night is passed in dancing and revelry. Next morning, all may be seen at an early hour in holiday array; the elders in groups, under the fine old tamarind trees that surround the Akhra; and the youth of both sexes, arm-linked in a huge circle, dancing round the Karma tree, which, festooned with garlands, decorated with strips of coloured cloth and sham bracelets and necklets of plaited

¹ E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1872), 135.

² *Ibid.*, 132.

³ *Ibid.*, 320.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁵ R. V. Russell and Hiralal, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (London, 1916), iv, 153.

⁶ *Ibid.*, iii, 576.

⁷ W. G. Archer, *The Blue Grove* (London, 1940), 43; S. C. Roy, *The Birhors* (Ranchi, 1925), 358; S. C. Roy, *Oraon Religion and Customs* (Ranchi, 1928), 240 ff.

⁸ S. C. Roy, *The Hill Bhuiyas of Orissa* (Ranchi, 1935), 240.

straw, and with the bright faces and merry laughter of the young people encircling it, reminds one of the gift-bearing tree so often introduced at our own great festival. Preparatory to the festival, the daughters of the head men of the village cultivate blades of barley in a peculiar manner. The seed is sown in moist, sandy soil, mixed with a quantity of turmeric, and the blades sprout and unfold of a pale yellow, or primrose colour. On the Karma day, these blades are taken up by the roots, as if for transplanting, and carried in baskets by the fair cultivators to the Akhra. They approach the Karma tree, and, prostrating themselves reverentially, place before it some of the plants. They then go round the company, and, like bridesmaids distributing wedding favours, present to each person a few of the yellow barley blades, and all soon appear, wearing, generally in their hair, this distinctive decoration of the festival. Then all join merrily in the Karma dances. The morning revel closes with the removal of the Karma; it is taken away by the merry throng and thrown into a stream or a tank, but after another feast, dancing and drinking are resumed.¹

Roy considered that this festival had been borrowed by the Uraon from their Hindu neighbours and combined with their own Kadlota festival performed for the purification of the village and the fertility of the crops. He adds many details, as that the branches of the tree are called the Karam Raja, and that red baskets of grain are placed before them. Girls carry the branches from house to house where they are anointed with oil and scarlet powder. The fertility aspect of the festival is further emphasized by the fact that the girls put cucumbers in their Karam baskets to represent babies.

An important part of the ceremony is the recitation of the Karam legend. Dalton gives a version of this from the *Bhavishya Purana*; Roy gives another, different, tale of seven brothers as current among the Uraon; the Bhuiya have another version.

The Karam festival was witnessed at the beginning of December 1942, at the Bhuiya village of Champajor in Keonjhar State. A shrine beautifully decorated with flowers was erected in the middle of the dancing-ground in front of the village dormitory. Branches of the Karam tree were cut and placed in the shrine. All night the boys and girls danced

¹ Dalton, *op. cit.*, 259.

before it, and a priest at midnight recited the story of Karam Raja and Karam Rani. In the morning, after a long period of dancing, the Karam tree was taken in procession round the village.

The story at Champajor village was of the usual kind that long ago when the old men and women were dancing, their hands and feet began to swell, and Karam Raja and Karam Rani came to say that they would only be cured if the boys and girls kept a feast in their honour. In Nagira, in Bonai State, the story was that there was once a rich man with seven sons and seven daughters. The sons, but not the daughters, were married. The head of the house went away for a long period of trading, and in his absence an old Brahmin came and finding the daughters and the daughters-in-law working hard at the affairs of the estate told them there would be no profit in their work unless they honoured Karam Raja and Karam Rani. They asked the Brahmin to stay with them and he taught them how to keep the festival. In the middle of their dancing and drinking the merchant came home, and supposing his children to be wasting their time beat them and destroyed the shrine they had made. Karam Raja and Karam Rani then went away to the jungle and sat beneath their tree. The merchant lost his money, and at last in despair went to the tree and brought a branch on his shoulders to his house. He celebrated the festival and his wealth was restored.

But in Ronta, Bonai State, the Karam festival was associated with a story very similar to those that have already been given in *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal*. Long ago there was a Bhuiya merchant who had seven sons. Six of these were married and worked hard in the house. The seventh who was unmarried did nothing but worship the Karam tree. He would fast all day, and then dance before it, beating a drum made of a plantain stalk. As a result of this worship great wealth came to the merchant's house, and the six brothers grew jealous. They broke the boy's drum and drove him from his home.

When the worship of the Karam tree stopped, the merchant lost his money. He was an old man and he thought, 'I will go to Bhagavan and ask what is the matter.' On his way he met an old woman and when she learned that he was going to Bhagavan she said, 'Ask him why it is that when I use my rice-husker the end strikes against my breast and hurts me till I am ready to die.'

After a time the old man met a merchant who asked him to inquire from Bhagavan why it was that, though he had dug a tank and it was full of water, they could not use it because of the insects that infested it.

Then the old man came to a garden and its owner said to him, 'When you meet Bhagavan, ask him why all the fruit on my mango trees decays.'

At last the old man reached Bhagavan and said, 'In former days I could not find room to store my wealth, but now it is all gone.' 'It is lost', said Bhagavan, 'because your six sons drove out their younger brother and neglected the worship of Karam Raja.'

Then Bhagavan said, 'That old woman has the only rice-husker in the village and she will not allow anyone else to use it. That is why it hurts her breast. That merchant will not let the villagers use his tank, and so it is always full of insects. That gardener will not let anyone else eat his fruit, and so it all decays.'

As the old Bhuiya went home he told the gardener, the merchant and the woman what Bhagavan had said, and when he reached his house he called his youngest son and made him begin the worship of Karam Raja and Karam Rani again. Soon the old man's wealth was restored, and since that day the Bhuiya have observed the Karam festival.

The Gond and Pardhan of Mandla say that the Karma songs originated in Kodia Bhakar (presumably Chang Bhakar) at the same time as Ghanshyam was born in a Bharewa's house. Ghanshyam's umbilical cord was cut by itself without the help of a knife or midwife and his placenta (which was the Karma) ran away to Surguja State. In a dream Ghanshyam had told the Rani of Surguja that he was going to visit her. She made many preparations for his coming and a pole cut from the Karam tree called Karmadar was put up in the dancing-ground.

When the Bharewa found that Ghanshyam and the Karma had run away they pursued them and when they reached Surguja and saw the Karmadar pole they sang,

I

WHERE were you born Ghanshyam Deo?
Where did you take your form?
On earth I was born

In the world I took my form
 Where did you clear the grass for your dancing-ground
 Cleaning all four corners
 Putting lights on the corners?
 In every village there are shrines in your honour
 And from the corners of your dancing-ground
 You have called all the gods to your Karma.

But when they asked the Rani to send the god and the Karma songs back she said to them, 'It was written in your fate (karma) and so they came to me. It is by my good karma that I am able to possess them.'

Since then it is said that the Rani of Surguja never gets up in the morning without singing five Karma songs and before she splits her tooth-twig she sings another five.

Ghanshyam is sometimes supposed to be responsible for giving rain and when there is drought the people sing Karma in his honour.

The Karma tree (*Adina cordifolia*, Hook.¹) is a tall deciduous tree with cordate leaves, and is distributed throughout India. Its wood is used for building, but the Birhor—and probably other tribes who observe the festival—must not use it for fuel or in their houses.² It is not regarded as specially sacred in the Central Provinces or in Bastar, but the *Vishnu Purana* describes how Krishna loved to climb it and hide himself in its thick foliage. It was from a Kadamba tree (which is the same as the Karma) that he leapt into the serpents' pool and subdued Kaliya, the snake king.³

The people of the Maikal Hills do not observe the Karma festival today, though a belief in the ceremonial value of the Karma dance persists. In times of drought or calamity, a Panda (priest) may be inspired to declare that a chain of Karma dances must be weaved round the country. Then parties of men and women go from village to village dancing; each place visited takes up the theme in turn, and passes it on. The dance is not now, however, associated with the Karma tree, but many of the ceremonies described for the Uraon can be paralleled in the Jawara festival of Mandla.

Except that at the beginning of the Karma season, which opens in September when the rains are over and continues to the end of the hot weather, there is a ceremony when a Panda

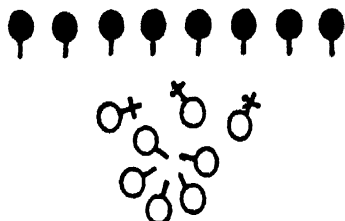
¹ Dalton calls it by its synonym *Nauclea cordifolia*, Willd.

² Roy, *The Birhors*, 383.

³ H. H. Wilson, *The Vishnu Purana* (London, 1864-77), Chap. VII.

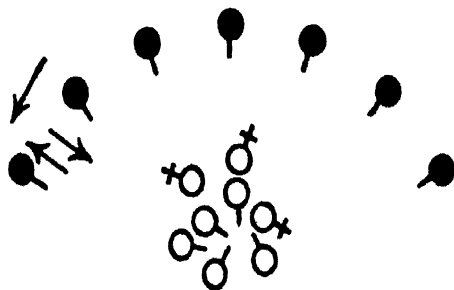
brings a plate with a lighted lamp and rice and salutes each of the dancers in turn, the Karma of the Maikal Hills is a dance and nothing more.

The formation and pattern of the dance is of three main kinds. The Thadi and Lahaki Karma is danced by a line of women facing a group of male drummers and singers.

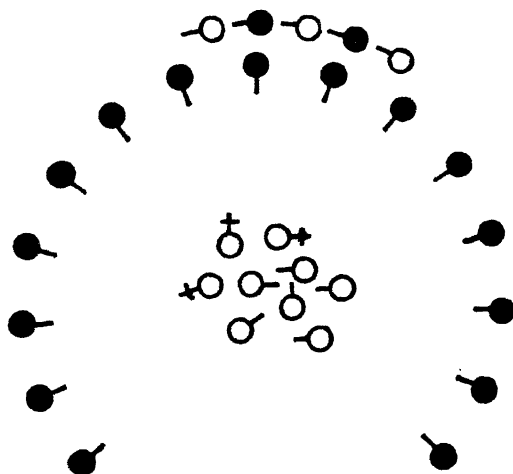


The women remain standing upright for part of the time; at intervals they bend forward and move a few steps up to the group of men and then back. In the Lahaki form, which is danced very quickly and vigorously, the line of women slowly rotates round the men as it moves to and fro.

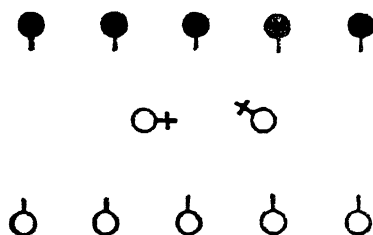
The essence of the Khalaha Karma is that the line of girls should revolve quickly round the group of men. It is a double movement, for the women go in towards the men and round anti-clockwise at the same time.



In some of the more elaborate Baiga dances, the main line of women circles slowly, while a small group of boys and girls with clappers goes round in the opposite direction.



The third kind of pattern is the Jharpat, which implies any kind of dance in which men and women dance opposite each other. This takes many different forms, but its base may be illustrated thus



Sometimes this dance swings simply to and fro; sometimes the whole group rotates slowly, generally anti-clockwise, on its own axis. In the Baigani Dawad variation of this movement, the women remain in line, but the men are in a group; they run quickly to and fro with a pretty tripping step, swinging their feet without touching the ground at the end of each run. In the Baigani Jhumar also the men and women move to and fro opposite each other, but with a slower step. The Badiani Karma, which owes its name to the Badi caste, is a formation of a line of men facing a line of women which circles very quickly with long steps; it sometimes goes so fast that the two lines form a large circle.

These are the main patterns of the Karma. The women always dance hand in hand, sometimes standing erect and sometimes bent well forward. The chief beauty of the dance is in the steps, which often attain a wonderful precision and speed. Many of these have been described in *The Baiga*.

The Karma songs are fitted to the dances, but there is not a very strict rule about this—for it is always possible to adapt a song by inserting extra syllables and varying the amount of repetition. Each dance-pattern can be performed to a number of different tunes.

Most, though not all Karma songs, consist of three parts—the Rag, the Tek and the Ad. The Rag is the introductory portion that lets the dancers know what tune or rhythm is to be used. It consists of a single phrase—*Aho hai, Aho ho hai* and so on—which is not repeated. The Tek is that part of the song which is sung while the people are actually dancing, bent forward and moving about. It is constantly repeated, and may be regarded as a sort of chorus. The Ad is sung in the intervals between the actual dancing, when the women straighten themselves and stand still, only slightly swaying their bodies to and fro.

The songs are usually sung antiphonally, but not like the Dadaria where a second group or individual must answer the first with something new. Here the second group must pick up and repeat whatever the first group gives them.

Occasionally the songs are in rhyme, but more frequently they gain their effect by constant repetition and by assonance. A line like

Ori re ori koilāri jhori kai din le hobo rāni luka chori
is repeated in whole or in part over and over again. Consider also the effect of

Hai hai lahari hai ga lahar lahar karai wa lahari hai re.

Onomatopaeic and echo-words, alliteration and 'internal rhyme' further aid the swing and vigour of the song.

A special feature of the Karma songs is the use of standardized clichés which may be used at any time and to any extent. Expressions like '*Jhe lag be, Don't do it*', '*Jhe bolo, Don't say a word*', '*Ab dhire dhire dhire, Now do it slowly*', '*Nahi āwai, He won't come*', '*Chode de be, Let me go*', '*Bhalle, bhalle, bhalle, well, well, well*', with their sexual suggestiveness, are inserted as an impromptu chorus into any song. There are certain words also that are inserted, irres-

pective of the sense or grammar, to fill out the line and make it fit the music or the dance. Not any words can be used, but *karela* (implying sexual congress), *hansa* (goose), *hira* (diamond), *prān* (life), *bandho* (brother), *dhoki* (deceiver), *chiraiya* (bird) are constantly employed.

The difficulties of recording the songs (quite apart from translating them) are considerable. The actual singing of No 7 may have been something like this—

O ho ho re hāy

Jhe bolo jhe bolo sanja sabera mor hira
Surta āthai chiraiya chiraiya jorike lāne.
Dupār O sanja sabera dhire dhire dhire
Dupār O sanja sabera O karela mor.

But of this only the words italicized belong to the real song : the others are official improvisations which may or may not be included.

THE KARMA SONGS

WE will now give specimens of the different types of Karma accompanied in many cases by their music, to indicate their form.

THE KHALAHA KARMA

These are the very popular songs of the lowlands.

2



Rāg: Oha hāy

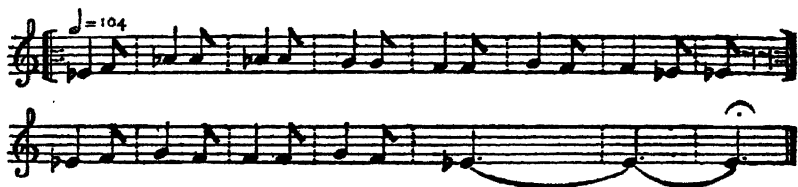
*Tek: Pihāla kon ban khoju ga
Piha basai pardesh hansāla
Kon ban khoju re?*

*Ad: Jin bangālīn beti jinaki lambi lambi kes
Apan patila chhodke taje konake desh.*

In what jungle should I seek my love?
He has settled in a strange country
In what jungle should I seek my swan?

That Bengali girl with her long long hair
Has left her husband to seek another land.

3



Rāg: O ho a hāy

Tek: Ek baje ma gādi chhutai

Dui baje ma rel.

Tin baje ma saiya chhutai

Phutai lālten.

Tikat kātoga abato gādi chhutai

Bilāspurkha re.

Ad: Na mola khāy jāy

Na mola piy jāy

Na mola kuchhusuhāy.

At one o'clock the train is off

At two o'clock the railway train

At three o'clock my lover goes

And the lantern breaks.

Come, get your ticket, for the train

Is off to Bilaspur.

I cannot eat

I cannot drink

O nothing pleases me.

4



Raisuri mālāla bisure āyo ohi narwāma

Raisuri mālāla bisure āyo ga.

*Rākh dharle bhusa dharle aur dharle chhindi kucha ga.
Althi kalthi pairi mājoi ohī narwāma
Raisuri māla.*

O MY coloured necklace!
I forgot it in that very stream
I had ashes, I had chaff
I had a brush of palm leaves
On either side turning my anklets
I cleaned them in that very stream
My coloured necklace.

KHALAHA JHULANIA KARMA

5



Rāg: Hare-a-hāy.

*Tek: Karela kaha nikal gai ga
Nayana ma jādu dāl
Chiraiya kaha nikal gai re*

*Ad: Kāri piri churi pahirai
Bichma pahirai kakana.
Dinake to najar ma dekhai
Rāt dethai sapana.*

WHERE has my dark love gone?
My bird—she put magic on my eyes—
Where has she flown away?
She has black and yellow bangles
Brass bracelets in the middle
By day I see her with my eyes
At night she's but a dream.

THE THADI KARMA

This quieter and more monotonous dance seems to allow more room for poetry. It is performed to a number of different tunes.

6



Rāg: Oho-ho-ho re hā-ā-y.

Tek: Sagli umirala maike gamāy to dāre ka lai ke jābe sasurāra

Dekh to bhala.

*Ad: Chal chal chalti hai dil hai udāsa
Jal bhitar khade hoke
Marat hai piyāsa ga.*

If you have wasted all your days at home
What will you have to take to your husband's house?

Now she is on her way
And her heart is sad.
She stands in water
Yet she is dying of thirst.

7



Boys

Rāg: O ho ho re hāy

*Tek: Sanja sabera surta āthai jorike lāne
Dupār o sanja sabera.*

*Ad: Chola bane hai kaisa pānike phulka
Hawa lagat ghur jāna.*

Boys

Khāle mircha dharle dhirja.

GIRLS

IN the evening and the morning
Comes a longing for my love
At the midday and the evening and the morning.
Life is like a bubble on the water
A touch of wind dissolves it.

Boys (*mockingly*)

EAT some chillies and be patient.

When someone is bitten by a snake, he eats chillies and so long as they taste hot he knows he will recover. So too the lover will come through happily if she has patience.

8

Rāg: O ho ho re hā-ā-y.

*Tek: Phul phulai gulābke ya ghamad rahāy
Bhannāwai ga ki phulphulai tor phule
Phulwāri ma ga ki phulai jejāma tumhāra re.*

BLOSSOMS the rose
Its music fills the world
And in your own face there's a flower
While in the garden of your bed
Blossoms the rose.

9

Tek: Awat hansāla pidha de de

Adar badāyiga

Aṇne jorila kate supāri de de

Bāñla de de wo bālaka.

Ad: Manmāna ghokai bhaiya dilama wichārai

Ghoki ghoki ke chola rowai ga.

GIVE a seat to your visitor

So will you be honoured

Give prepared supari to your own mate

Pray that a barren woman may have a child

O brother, I have thought and thought

I have asked my heart

By this anxious thought my life has wept.

THE LAHAKI KARMA

This is another very popular type of song. It is sung, as the Lahaki Karma is danced, with great vigour and speed, while the feet move in intricate rhythm. The Gond say that once they are caught by the Lahaki, they are lost to the world, and all its troubles are forgotten.

10



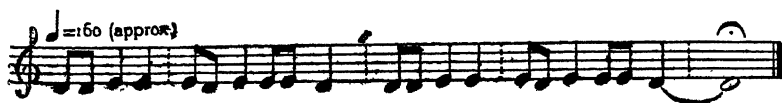
Rāg: Ohoho ooo re o.

*Tek: Talawa ma jāl phikai māre machhuri
Nahiga nahi sanghi kaise milau najuria.*

*Ad: Kon kahāy mār mār kon kahāy jhai mār
Kon kahāy gharale nikār.*

I THREW the net into the lake to kill the fish
O friend, how can I meet her eyes?
One says, Kill, kill. Another says, Do not kill
Some say, Turn her out of the house.

11



*Tek: Jhingurjāke boliya sun lebe
Dekhema jhingara ghine ghināpan boliyānama
Tor bara suhāpan boliyānama.*

*Ad: Kon mahina bolai pāpire pihuwa kone mahina
Jhingurja hānāwai kon mahina.*

HARK to the song of the grasshopper.
How ugly to look at
How sweet to hear.

In which month sings the bird of sin?
In which month sings the grasshopper?

THE PANKANI KARMA

The Pankani Karma is not a different dance but is the name of the tune. The music, which unfortunately has not been recorded, is very Hindu in character as are the references in the song itself which are all to Krishna. The Panka, who now form a semi-Hindu caste, are probably aboriginal in origin. They are very intelligent and have adopted the Gond songs and dances with enthusiasm. Their interpretations of the Karma and Dadaria are often of great beauty and might well have a book to themselves.

12

Rāg: Ahāho o re e e.

*Tek: Banasi bajānālāre chhode debe māya
Nande mohanjike lāla hāy re.*

*Ad: Teri banasi rasake bhini bāji madhur rasāl
Sunsun sāri brijke nāri bhul gaye gharmāl.*

RUBY of Nande Mohan
Stop playing on your flute

For the sweet rasa of its music
Sinks into the very soul of love
When the women of Brij hear it
They forget their homes.

THE BAIGANI KARMA

The Baigani Karma dance may take the form of either the Baigani Dawad or the Baigani Jhumar which we have already described. The name Baigani is also given to the great circular dance where often two concentric rings of dancers revolve in opposite directions. The songs and tunes that follow are used in this dance.

13



*Dukh sahi nahi jāy
Ye dāi bāpana ke mai nohar re.
Khāndeke dhotiya mudhe ma dharehu
Ohi laike jāhu sasura ghare.*

I CANNOT bear this sorrow
 I am the very life of my mother and father
 The cloth that used to be over my shoulder
 It is over my head now
 That is what I will take to my husband's house.

A girl is going to her husband's house for the first time :
 she will take him her maturing youth symbolized in the cloth
 flung over her head.

14



Ho-o-o hāy.
Patareli hai jamān dekhanima lāgai suhāpan re
Das rupaiyāke bindiya
Sādesāt ke hawāl
Pāch rupaiyāke sakhuri
Hāy sakhuri to chumai gāl
Dekhani ma lāgai suhāpan re.

SHE is graceful
 My young darling
 It is delight
 To look at her
 She has a bindiya worth ten rupees
 Her hawal is seven eight
 The chains are five rupees
 The chains kiss her cheeks
 What delight it is to see her !

The bindiya is a beautiful silver ornament tied across the head. The hawal is a necklace made by stringing rupees on a decorative cord.

JHUMKI KARMA

This form of the dance appears to have been borrowed from the wandering Dewar or the Badi. One or two women balance baskets on their heads and gaily decorate themselves with bells on their feet. A pair of male drummers accompany them. The dance has now been imitated by some of the Pardhan who regard it as a very special achievement. The following illustrates the form and type of the songs that are used.

15

Rāg: Aha ā ā ā ā āha.

*Tek: Ehe tola mohe dārega
Ghungaru balam tola mohi dāre re.*

Ad: Apan khawai dālbhāt tola detay pasia.

ALAS she has entranced you
With the bells on her ankles
She has entranced you.

Yet for herself she has boiled rice and pulse
And only gives you rice-water.

THE BAIGANI JHUMAR KARMA

16



*Achha dādure champa dār akhāda chholaw
Achha dādure chhote chhote chhokara bulāw*

Achha dādure chhote chhote mānduri mangāw
Achha dādure chhote chhote chhokari bulāw.

My dear little brother, make ready the dancing-ground
 My dear little brother, call some nice young boys
 My dear little brother, bring some nice little drums
 My dear little brother, call some nice little girls.

17

Rāg: Oho ooo hā ā ā y.

Tek: Bar kāte pipal kāte āma kahe kāte
Gauka pidāla mudama lāde
Dharam kahe dāre
Aise bhanej kāhe māre.

Ad: Jān to kahāy gaon kaise
Khau to kahāy dāl bhāt
Karam karawat ho gais
Khichari ma pad gay hāt.

You have cut a banyan
 You have cut a pipal
 But why did you cut the mango tree?
 It is as if you were carrying
 A cow's leg upon your head
 Why have you cast away your virtue?
 Why have you killed your nephew?

He said he would go to a village
 He said he would eat rice and pulse
 But fortune turned its back on him
 And all his hand grasped was khichri.

BAIGANI DAWAD KARMA

18

Tek: Anganāma tehi māre anganāma tehi māre
Bhaisi charat sing jor.

Ad: Kon ban ahira gaiyāla charāye ga
Kon ban paniya piyaye.

HE was calling in the yard
 The buffaloes graze with horns together

In which jungle did the Ahir feed the cows?
In which jungle did he water them?

THE BADIANI KARMA

The songs are usually sung with the head on one side.
The style and music are borrowed from the wandering Badi.

19

Rāg: Jehāy.

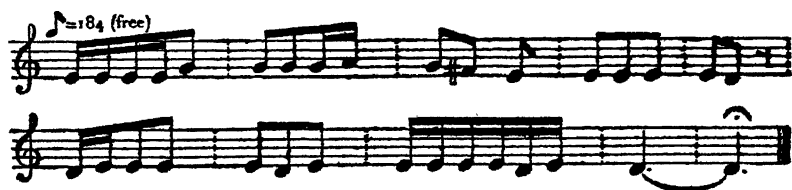
*Tek: Nahi dikhay gāoke jawayya ga
Phikar karai mor ghar ke rahayya.*

*Ad: Kekhar hāth likh chitthi bhejo swāmi
Kekhar hāth sandesha re?*

I CANNOT see anyone who is going to my village
How anxious my people at home must be.

O master, by whose hand should I write and send the letter?
By whose hand should I send a message?

20



Rāg: O ho ho re hāy.

*Tek: Irphir ke chāra charle warag ke suwana ga
Baithela khojai hariyar birachha re.*

*Ad: Bangat ma dāi hotāy bangat ma bhāi
Bighade ma koi nahi puchhai.*

WANDER as you will
Eat your food in freedom
The parrot seeks a green tree for its perch.

In good fortune your mother stands by you
In good fortune your brother stands by you
But in disaster no one asks for you.

THE JHARPAT KARMA

21

Rāg: Oho Oooo hāre hai.

*Tek: Bichhal gayo madalāke kāndo
Bichhal gayo.*

*Ad: Na mola khāye jāy na mola pi jāy
Ghok parai kachhu na suhay.*

I HAVE slipped in the mud of Mandla
I have slipped in the mud.

I cannot eat, I cannot drink
The memory (of Mandla) comes
And nothing else contents me.

The onomatopæic cries and exclamations that occur rather frequently in these songs are an important element of their technique. The use of echo-words, of internal rhyme, of vigorous and expressive bits of verbal music, makes the songs *go*: it gives them life and energy, and the noise of the words blends with the roar of the drums and the stamping feet.

The use of such expressions was common in Elizabethan England, and more recently has ranged from the semi-humorous—such as Browning's 'Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, tootle-te-tootle the fife' and Lear's 'He tinkledy-binkledy-winkled a bell' to serious attempts to express sound such as T. S. Eliot's borrowing with amazing success of the 'prick-song' of the 'ravished nightingale' from Lyly.

Yet there the nightingale
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,
'Jug jug' to dirty ears.

Lyly's full account of the nightingale's song was 'jug jug jug jug teru'. Brathwaite gives it as 'jug jug' and 'te'u te'u'. But Middleton, for some reason, makes the same bird cry 'twit twit twit', which is hardly credible.

The cries and calls of birds are naturally those most commonly attempted by the poets. Shakespeare makes the lark chant 'tirra lirra' and the strutting chanticleer cry 'cock-a-didle dow'. The Elizabethan owl usually hooted 'te-whit

te-whoo' or 'tu-whit to-who', a tradition maintained by Coleridge, whose owl in *Christabel* cried 'tu-whoo! tu-whoo!' Thomas Nashe attempts 'cuckoo, jug-jug, pee-we, to-wittawoo' for a symphony of birds. W. H. Auden speaks of a 'murmuration of starlings'.

In India, the Uraon describe the song of the koel-cuckoo as 'kuhu kuhu': in our collection it is given as 'kuhu-kuhu' and 'kahar-kahar'. The Vedda reproduce the song of the dove as 'kudurun kudurun' and the twitter of birds as 'silibili silibili'. The Uraon represent the murmur of bees as

Nanjani, manjani
Ranjani, manjani.

The Pardhan horse neighs 'hiyo hiyo' or 'hu hu', and trots 'hin hin hin hin.'

Drums and music are everywhere the same. Elizabethan Fletcher makes his trumpets sound 'tara tara tara tara tara' and his drums go 'dub dub'. Hirakhan's 'drum of victory' sounded 'dum dum'. The heroes of our songs tremble 'dal dal' or 'tar tar'; the heroines weep 'dhar dhar' and sob 'kalhar kalhar'. They laugh 'gad gad' and an old woman chuckles 'khad khad'.

A sound of great importance to the Gond and Pardhan singer is the musical tinkle of a girl's ornaments, a theme rarely celebrated in European poetry. But here the chutki toe-rings sound 'chutuk chutuk', the anklets go 'chunur chunur' or 'runjum runjum'—and when a youth hears the sweet music, his heart beats 'kudur budur'.

Other sounds that are attempted in these songs are—the splashing of water, 'lijak lijar'; rain falling, 'rimik jhimik' or 'rinjhim rinjhim'; a stream rippling, 'jhir jhir'. The noise of the churn is 'ghamar ghamar', of kneading 'gadar gadar', of cooking 'karak karak', of boiling clothes 'radbad radbad'. The beat of the large rice-husker worked by the feet is well represented as 'dhok dhik dhok dhik'. A litter comes creaking and swinging 'diggi dola' and 'dip dip'.

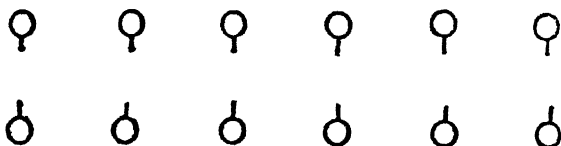
Unfortunately, there is little comparative material available in the existing monographs. But the 'echo-words' common in every Indian language serve a similar purpose of giving life and energy to the verse. Large, exciting, double words are also used as in other languages: Gurdon points out the Khasi habit of using such words 'which add much to the finish

THE DANCES

THE Rina, Sua and Tapadi are dances for women and the Rina at least may once have been a ceremonial and patriotic performance before the Rani in the courts of the old Gond kings. Today the Rina is danced at Diwali, and the Sua and the Tapadi (which is the Baiga version) during the cold weather from November to January. There are no very strict rules, however, and the Rina may also be danced at marriages. These dances are specially popular among married and old women, and members of the Hindu cultivating castes join freely with the aborigines in performing them.

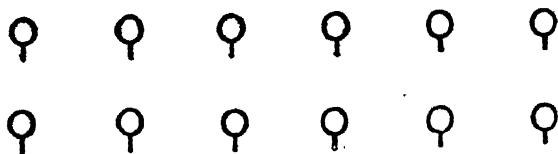
Like the Saila, the Rina is often danced competitively against the women of another village. The challenging party arrives in the evening to give the other women time to prepare. After dark they try to turn over the logs of wood placed as weights on the roofs of their hosts' houses. If they succeed in doing this unnoticed, they believe they will win the contest. If they are discovered, their hosts offer fire and incense at a cross-roads the next morning to undo the charm.

The general form of each of these dances is the same and is very simple. The women form themselves into two rows facing each other, but not holding hands.

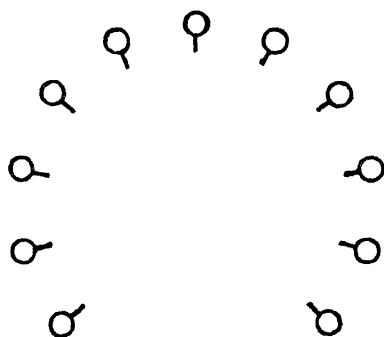


For the Rina and Tapadi dances, the rows bend forward alternately clapping their hands and moving their feet very gradually with a simple left-right left-right movement so that the double line slowly rotates on its own axis.

After a time one line turns its back on the other, and the women of both go down on their knees and clap their hands vigorously, swaying to and fro.



Finally, both lines join together and go round in a big circle, all facing inwards, bending down and clapping their hands.



The Sua dance differs only in its more exact imitations of the movements of a parrot. The women move both feet together, very slightly, sliding them along the ground, raising the toes a little first and then the heels. They swing their buttocks slightly and move their heads to and fro as a parrot does. At the end of each line of the song, they utter a shrill parrot-like cry. The best dancers use their hands to great advantage, clapping them together very low down and bringing them up and towards the breast, opening them rather wide.

22

Ri-rina rina rihālo rina

Chutuk chutuk chutki bajai pairin ko tāra

Dhiro dhiro wah do jābo bajār.

THE toe-rings sound *chutuk chutuk* in tune with the anklets

Let us go slowly slowly to the bazaar.

Ri-rina rihilo rina ri-rina-rina ki-i-i

Rihālo rina

Kon desale āyere jogi

Kon des tay jā-ā-ā-be jogi re

Ki-i-i-i

Agum desale āye pachhum des jā-ā-ā-be jogi re.

FROM what country do you come, O Jogi?

To what country are you going?

You have come from the country in front

You are going to the country behind, O Jogi.



Sua nāchai jāwo ki sua nāche
Jāwore suana bhāi sua nāche jāwo tinojan
Suana sua nāche jāwo tinojan
Asman lāgai gādima chadh jatau
Suana kotāke māya dharke.

LET us go to dance the Parrot Dance
 O brother, let us three go to dance
 To dance the Parrot Dance, the three of us
 O how I long to get in the train
 And go to Kota for the Parrot Dance.

The parrot is famous in Indian folklore as a bird of learning, a go-between of lovers and a sex symbol. The parrot does in fact have a larger brain than other birds and its thick tongue enjoys a finer sense of taste. There is a learned parrot in the *Katha Sarit Sagara*;¹ another called Vaisampayana in Bana's *Kadambari*. In the *Katha Sarit Sagara* again we find a continent King of the Parrots named Hemaprabha, rich in the chastity it had practised in a former birth. It helps the foolish parrot Charumati, enslaved by its passions, to renounce the society of females.² King Vikramakesarin had a parrot of god-like intellect named Vidagdha-chudamani. It knew all the Shastras and ever assisted him by its discernment.³ According to the *Vishnu Purana* the wife of the sage Kasyapa was the mother of all parrots. In a story recorded by Steel and Temple a parrot is the companion and helper of the hero and assists the heroine.⁴

Although in the Central Provinces the parrot is the go-between of lovers,⁵ the classical view of this bird is that

¹ Penzer, v, 27 ff.

² Ibid, vi, 86.

³ Ibid, vi, 183 ff.

⁴ F. A. Steel and R. C. Temple, *Wide-Awake Stories* (Bombay, 1884), 255 ff.

⁵ As in the story of Dhola—H. L. Kavyopadhyaya, *A Grammar of the Chhattisgarhi Dialect* (Calcutta, 1921), 198 ff.—and in many of our poems.

it has the lowest opinion of women. King Vikramakesarin's parrot, for example, declares that 'females are of intolerable audacity, immoral and wicked' and the talking parrot is often represented as warning the deceived husband. Even in the story of Dhola, where the parrot proves itself so useful a go-between, the heroine while admitting its intelligence deplores its infidelity.

Crooke says that the bird seems to have been a sort of marriage totem among certain tribes: images of it made of the wood of the cotton tree or of clay were hung up in the marriage-shed by the Kol and others.¹ In our poems, as well as in W. G. Archer's collections, the parrot is often associated with sex and marriage; it is used both as a male and a female symbol.

Padumavati, the daughter of King Gandharva Sen of Ceylon, had a parrot called Hiramani which could understand the speech of human beings. It escaped and was caught by a fowler who sold it to Raja Ratan Sen of Chitore. When the parrot described Padumavati's beauty to its master, he renounced the throne and went on foot with the parrot to Ceylon. When he reached there he sent the parrot as his messenger and at last married the princess. This story, which is told in a sixteenth century Hindi poem by Malik Muhammad Jaisi, is illustrated by the delightful picture of the Jaipur School, showing the princess catching the bird, which is reproduced in Gangoly's *Masterpieces of Rajput Painting*.

¹ Crooke, ii, 252. For an excellent story about a parrot, see *North Indian Notes and Queries*, v, 31.

RINA SONGS

24

Ririna rina rihila rina! He nāre suwāho!
The dancers are dancing, the people gather round O
How lovely are the feet adorned with silver
How beautiful the anklets with their sounding rings
The dancers are dancing, the people gather round O
Ririna rihila ay.

25

O SLEEPER rise, if you would see
At midnight the fig burst into flower
The feet adorned with rings are beautiful
Look at her throat, the necklace circling it
The anklets made the ankles beautiful
From the toes I will remove the rings
How shall I know if our thoughts agree, O friend?
O sleeper rise, if you would see
At midnight the fig burst into flower.

26

Toni wo sua ki ri rina rihil ai
Speak to me, parrot, on the little fig tree
For this is the home of parrots like you
On the slippery stones in the river
The girls are washing their clothes
And laughing *gad gad*
For they are preparing for tomorrow's festival
They have brought out their gold ornaments
Their silver necklaces
They have called their friends from all around
The koel has cried *kahar kahar*
Perhaps her sweet singing has brought the festival.

Compare the Kol Karma song—

Slowly fall the figs from the tree
But when the parrot
Sits on the branch
They come down in showers.¹

27

Ri rina wo rina ri ri nāwo rina

Life of my mind, where have you gone to fight?

I change my rings from toe to toe

Khelo khelo khelo

But my bed is lonely

Jhelo jhelo jhelo

Life of my mind, where have you gone?

I said, Don't go, but you would go

Khelo khelo khelo

I change my anklets from foot to foot

Jhelo jhelo jhelo

And change them back again

But my bed is lonely

Khelo khelo khelo

Jhelo jhelo jhelo.

28

Ri rina rina wo wah rihal rina

Kagdi, walk slowly slowly

Slide your feet slowly along

In the country where there is no famine of scorpion-rings

Kagdi, walk slowly slowly

In the country where there is no famine of armlets.

As she walks she thinks with fear

As I went they said, You are running away

But leave us a message as you go to a stranger's land

Kagdi, there's still some red maize in your bin

Kagdi, walk slowly slowly

In the country where there is no famine of necklaces.

Scorpion-rings are the silver or metal rings worn on the toes and bearing a crude representation of a scorpion. There is possibly a vague idea that they will protect against scorpion-bite.

¹ Original at p. 130 of *North Indian Notes and Queries*, 11 (1892).

WILL you have a cloth or a blanket?
Will you be a Brahmin or Chamar?
O fair Laharo, in the bun of your dark hair
The peacock cries
Will you eat hot or cold supper?
Will you go to Calcutta or Kasi?
O fair Laharo, in the bun of your dark hair
The peacock cries.

Laharo is a name given to a friendly, forward, exciting girl. The bun of hair, projecting at the back of the head and tied with gay colours, is regarded as most beautiful and attractive.

The peacock has not a very good reputation in Europe, for its cry is supposed to be a warning of death, and it is usually associated with the deadly sin of pride. For example, in Middle English literature the priest may be described as 'proud as a peacock' or a lover may be 'as any peacock proud and gay'. But in our songs the peacock is a living picture of colour, beauty and movement. It is the bright plumage and the dancing that is remembered. Even the fishing float made from its feathers is supposed to be so attractive to the fish that the word is used as symbol for a lover.

In traditional Indian mythology the peacock is represented as suffering from the heat and delighted with the first drops of rain. The peacock is supposed to watch the lightning flashing in the clouds which prophesy that its sorrow will soon be at an end. Its feathers get ruffled if it is taken near poison. Used in magic the feathers are a potent demon-scarer. The aborigines also use peacock feathers as symbols of the gods, as personal decoration and often carry bunches of them during their dances. The peacock, therefore, is an apt symbol for expressing the delight and vitality of a man's beloved.

SUA SONGS

30

I HAVE put on the measured bangles, parrot
But I do not see my sweet young dewar.

The bangles were brought all the way from Jubbulpore, parrot
But I do not see my little dewar.

My comb fits into my hair
But I do not see my young dewar.

On my arms are the tightly-fitting armlets
But my hard-hearted dewar does not come.

The armlets were made in Bilaspur
But I do not see my young dewar.

My nose-ring is fitted to my nose
But what has happened to my darling dewar?

The dewar or husband's younger brother stands in a relation of special intimacy and freedom to a Gond wife.

31

THE dweller on the hill, parrot
Is sitting on the mango branch
Take a message, parrot
Take a message to my mother in her country
Give father Ram-ramoa
Say Johar to mother
Your daughter is away in a foreign land
Do not weep for her, mother
But the parrot flew away
And sat on a tamarind branch.

'Ram-ramoa' is the modern form of greeting; 'Johar' is more old-fashioned, but still common among the wilder tribesmen, specially in Bastar.

32

MOTHER-IN-LAW told me to clean the pulse, parrot
But nanand gave me the half-prepared kodai.

Grind it, bhauji, grind it as if it were wheat-flour.

As I was grinding it, my shoulders lost their strength, parrot
And I broke my necklace of nine hundred rupees.

The burning nanand heard it, parrot
And whispered to her mother
I said to my mother, O mother,
Your daughter-in-law has broken the necklace.

This does not concern me daughter
Your father will settle this.

I said to my father, O father
Your daughter-in-law has broken the necklace.

This does not concern me, daughter
Let your brother settle this.

I said to my brother, O brother
Your wife has broken the necklace.

Little girl, do not talk scandal
For one day you too will have to go
To the house of your father-in-law.

It was the neighbour's child, parrot
That broke the necklace
It was the child that broke it, parrot.

Nanand is the husband's younger sister. Bhauji is how a girl would address her husband's wife. Usually the relations between the two are very friendly: the situation in this poem is exceptional.

33

O PLAYFUL maina, don't go to that village
She shouldn't go there, should she, parrot?
The Raja's son there is too free a lover.

Don't flirt with me, boy, I'll tell my father.

I'll make your father drunk, parrot
And carry you away
She shouldn't go there, should she, parrot?

The maina bears a family resemblance to the European starling. 'No bird', says Eha, 'is a more characteristic feature of Indian life than the maina. It is everywhere, in town or

village, field or garden, sometimes walking after cattle and catching the grasshoppers they startle, sometimes patrolling a field on its own account, nodding its head at every step. It is always among the scarlet flowers of the Coral Tree when they are in bloom. Mainas are eminently sociable. They go in pairs, or small parties, talking a great deal. They sleep in company like crows, and jabber incredibly while getting to bed.' The suitability of the bird as a woman-symbol needs no emphasizing.

34

Put a basket on your head
 Under your arm a bag
 Come, let's go to Karanjia bazaar
 In Karanjia bazaar what is there for sale?
 Red spinach and garlic leaves
 Ah, don't forget the red spinach
 With old men the bazaar is crowded
 For a pice you can get
 A pair of old dears
 And a boy thrown in for luck.

35

For twelve years I worshipped Siva, and what is my reward?
 I have got a hunchback husband for my piety
 If my hunchback comes while I am straining rice
 He goes all over the house to find me the strainer
 If he comes in when I am making the bed
 He goes about to find the ghursi
 But I'd like to get in an engine-cart
 And go back to my mother's house.

You may return to your own country, girl
 You may marry another man
 But he won't be as good as me.

You may turn out a dark girl
 You may turn out a fair girl
 But you won't get another blue sambhar like me.

In our town there is a Raja
 The great Bir Singh Raja
 Who's a hunchback just like me.

The ghursi is the village warming-pan, an earthen bowl which is filled with smouldering scraps of cow-dung and placed under the bed at night. The warmth it gives, together with the stuffy atmosphere, makes up for the lack of mattress and bedding.

36

FROM West to East the Jogi has come, parrot
And is sitting on the threshold
Take rice and pulse, Jogi
But go away from our door
May there be in your house
Full store of rice and pulse
But I am not going from your door
Take your rice and pulse back again
Give me a lucky cow, O parrot.

37

O MOTHER, your daughter-in-law is a great wanton
She is sure to be out in the goldsmith's shop.

What business has she in the goldsmith's shop?
We can get some ear-rings at home.

O mother, your daughter-in-law is a great wanton
She is sure to be out in the Koshta's shop.

What business has she in the Koshta's shop?
We can get cloth for her at home.

O mother your daughter-in-law is a great wanton
She is sure to be out in the Teli's shop.

What business has she in the Teli's shop?
We can get her oil at home.

Rangāreli, the word we have translated 'wanton', means highly-coloured, adventurous, flirtatious, a domestic tart.

38

MOON and Sun, I fall at your feet
Give me not birth as a girl again
From birth we wretched women are orphans
Mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law

Are always abusing us
 By their continual nagging we are burnt
 So I ran away to the forest
 But the treacherous river stopped me.
 I said to the Dhimar, O Dhimar
 Dhimar my brother, take me across.
 Little girl, stay here for a day
 Tomorrow I'll take you over.
 But during the day I'll die of hunger
 In the night I'll perish of cold.
 In the daytime I'll feed you with a basket of fish
 At night I'll spread my net over your young body.

The most common theme of the Sua songs and ballads is the unhappy lot of a girl under the rule of parents-in-law in her husband's house. The Dhimar is a fisherman, one of whose duties during the rains is to escort wayfarers across the flooded rivers.

39

Go, parrot, to the forest of joy and sandal
 Go and bring nine bunches of mangoes.
 At your desire I will go for the mangoes
 But in whose hands shall I give them?
 Raja Bikram is sitting on his throne
 Put them in his turban.
 But I do not know him, sister
 How shall I put them in his turban?
 His body is slender, but his face is full
 And he has a thin moustache.

40

THERE is a parrot's wing among the crows
 Your darkened eyes of love pursue me
 My bird.

41

IN my father's garden
 The parrot sits among the trees
 And picks the leaves

Now try with bread in your hand
To tempt the parrot to come down.

Come down, come down, O parrot
Though you belong to others.

Sit in my lap and feed
O parrot, among the trees
In my father's garden.

42

PARROT, come to the woods of delight
Come to the woods of sandal
Bring a bunch of mango flowers
How shall I go?
How shall I fly?
How shall I bring the mango flowers?
Go on your heels
Fly with your wings
Carry the flowers in your beak
Parrot, come to the woods of delight
Come to the forest of sandal.

43

DIGGING with my finger, parrot
I sowed the kundru seed
Laden low with fruit, parrot
The shrub bent down to earth
Mother-in-law, give me the golden basket
I'm going to pick the kundru.
For whom will you cook potato and brinjal?
For whom will you curry the kundru?
For my lover I'll cook the potato and brinjal
For my hunchback I'll curry the kundru, parrot
Laughing I'll give it to my lover
Weeping I'll give it to my hunchback, parrot
I'd like to run off in an engine-train
But the love of my hunchback keeps me here, parrot.

44

SEVEN queens had Raja Daserath, six had children, one was barren

In the house they called her barren, in the town they called her barren

Everyone called her barren and she was much ashamed

She used to stay inside the house and never went abroad

When the cock crew, a bird called and she went to bathe

With rice well washed and leaves of bel she worshipped Mahadeo.

Why have you come? What work of yours has failed?

How many kos was his disc? Of his hair there was no measure.

For a son am I come, Mahadeo, for a son I have come on foot.

Bring a bison's milk and wash my hair and drink it

I will give you Hanuman for son and he will rule over Lanka.

45

WHO is going to Rai Ratanpur and who is going to Drug?
My brother is going to Rai Ratanpur, my husband's going to Drug.

Who will bring you anklets to adorn your heels?

Who will bring a co-wife to live in your house?

Brother will bring anklets to adorn my heels

Husband will bring a co-wife to live in my house.

How will I go with the anklets round my heels?

How will I go with a co-wife in the house?

Laughing I will go with anklets round my heels

Crying I will go with a co-wife in the house.

What will I do with the anklets round my heels?

What will I do with the co-wife in my house?

I'll change the anklets for others, parrot

I'll throw the co-wife in the fire, parrot.

46

SEVEN brothers had seven dogs, the seven went to hunt

Which brother carried the crooked gun, which brother carried the sword?

Big brother carried the crooked gun, little brother carried the sword

Which brother killed the deer, which brother killed the bison?
But by mistake for a deer they killed their sister's husband
Why, brothers, did you kill her husband and make your sister a widow?

Beneath what tree did you kill him and where did you put the corpse?

We killed him under the sandal, we put his corpse under a kadam

Who drank the blood of the body, who ate the flesh?

Earth drank the blood of the body, the vultures ate the flesh

For whom will you bring bangles and anklets, for whom will you watch the road?

For whom will you bring ten villages, for whom will you cook a feast?

Light a fire, little girl, to prepare your feast, he will hardly come by the road

For whom shall I make ready the bed, for whom shall I stitch the leaf-plates?

Your bed will be burnt, little girl, your leaf-plates be thrown in the fire.

Compare the Uraon poem¹—

Uncle and nephew
Like two wild geese
Uncle, O come, my uncle
And hunt in the jungle
Hearing a stag
I shot an arrow
Girl
It struck
My brother.

47

I WENT to beg for fire, parrot, as I was grinding in the stable
The clothes were boiling *radbad radbad*, the Raja's son was sitting by

The Dhobi's daughter, parrot, took the clothes and the Prince prepared his horse

¹ Archer, op. cit., p. 69.

She left the women's ghat, the men's ghat, and went where
the Dhobi washed the clothes

While the Dhobi's daughter, parrot, washed the clothes, the
Raja's son sat near.

Move move away, O Prince, or the ashy drops will splash you.

There are ashy drops for you, but for me is scented oil

O girl, leave this Dhobi's work and desert your Dhobi husband.

I cannot leave my Dhobi's work or desert my Dhobi husband.

Come, come, O Dhobi's daughter, come to my coloured palace

Come, Dhobi's daughter, I'll give you Bengal *pān* to eat.

May fire burn your coloured palace

May your Bengal *pān* turn poison

I will not leave my Dhobi work, I will not desert my husband.

48

MOTHER-IN-LAW, my brother has come to take me home.

I don't know what to say, your father-in-law will know.

What grain should I use for his dinner, what curry should
I prepare?

Take dirty kodai for his dinner, give him curry of gumi-
bhaji.

My brother takes milk for his dinner

He washes his hands in buttermilk

How can he eat gumi-bhaji?

She made him a dish of mokaiya grain, parrot

She cooked urid and mung pulse.

What pot should I use for his water?

What dish should I use for his food?

Give him water, my daughter-in-law, in the metal pot

Give him dinner in a brass dish.

Weeping she says to her brother, parrot

Come my brother and eat

She gives him water in a pot of flowers

His food in a dish of gold.

She rises from sleep and says to her mother-in-law, parrot

Mother-in-law hear my word, shall I go or not?

My brother has come to fetch me home.

I don't know what to say, your jethani will know
 She says to her nanand, parrot
 My brother has come to fetch me home
 Tell me, shall I go or no?

I don't know what to say, your nanand will know
 She says to her nanand, parrot
 My brother has come to fetch me home
 Tell me, shall I go or no?

Clean the cow-dung from twelve stables
 Bring twelve pots of water from the well
 Husk twelve measures of rice
 Then you may go to your mother's country
 So said the nanand, parrot.

The brother sat on his horse, parrot, the girl followed behind
 They went one kos, they went three kos
 At last the girl reached her mother's country, parrot.

49

To which hamlet has the Jogi come, bhaui?
 Where has he made his camp?

He has come to the Dhimar's hamlet, bhaui
 O how I long to see him
Tari O nāna O de mor nāna re sua tari nāwawa nāna
 From the swing the girl comes down
 Let us go to bathe in the lake
 From the curtain the maid comes out
 Take warm water with you
 I will go away away with the Jogi
 Take my cloth from the basket
 Comb my hair, put on my ornaments
 Don't tell my father and mother or they'll kill me
 The Jogi has come to the courtyard
 The maid has come out of the house
 O with this Jogi I will run away
 Good-bye, good-bye, my parrot
 If I live, I will come to see you
 If I die, it is the same sorrow throughout the world
 The Jogi went ahead, the maid behind, parrot
 He is going to his country, parrot, the maid goes behind him
 He's gone one kos, he's gone two kos

He soon will reach his country, parrot
He is pitching his tent by the lakeside, parrot.

A Jogi often symbolizes a lover in the songs. The term is not altogether complimentary, for it implies that a man's love is as unsettled and transitory as a wandering mendicant. But it may also mean that a man has become restless as a Jogi because he cannot win his love. A kos is generally considered to be two miles. It is 'the distance between a pipe and one's desire for another', or 'the time it takes for a plucked leaf to curl at the edges'.

THE STORY OF RAMULA

A SUA BALLAD

THE cock crows, dawn is breaking, parrot.
 Get up, daughter-in-law, get up and sweep the courtyard.
 How can I get up to sweep the courtyard, parrot?
 The child in my lap will weep.

Get up, daughter-in-law, and churn the curds.
 Do you hear him, parrot? And go to sell the buttermilk.

I don't know how to churn the curds, parrot,
 Or how to take the buttermilk for sale.

Swing your hips, make your shoulders flash to and fro
 And take the buttermilk to Muttranagar to sell it.

I can't do that, father-in-law—
 Don't you see, parrot? The child in my lap is crying.

Give the child in your lap soft laddu sweets
 And swing him in the cradle;
 We have a servant kept on food wages;
 Take him with you carrying a kawar.¹

But the servant has no kawar,
 O brother parrot, he has no kawar.

Come, come, didi,² I have put the buttermilk in the pot.
 Let us go, parrot, to sell it in Hardinagar.

As Ramula was lifting up the pot, the boy sneezed
 And the omen cut the way.

Wasn't it an omen, parrot, to cut the way?
 Ramula thought, O parrot, the boy has sneezed and cut the
 way,

I won't go to sell the buttermilk.

No didi come. The morning advances. It was no omen, but
 as the house was swept

Some chilli went into his nose to make him sneeze, parrot.

¹ A kawar is carried over the shoulders and consists of a pole from either end of which hangs an arrangement of cords (sikka) in which loads can be placed.

² Elder sister.

As Ramula leaves the house a snake crosses the way.
 Don't you see, parrot, a snake has cut the way?
 Ramula thought, Wasn't it an omen to cut the way?
 I won't go to sell the buttermilk.

No didi come. It's getting late. And everyone has a belly
 And a mouth chasing her.
 The poor snake was only going to get its food, parrot.

When Ramula reached the boundary
 O parrot, a jackal cut the path.
 Ramula stood pondering in her mind.
 O parrot, the pearly tears fell to the ground.
 Your brother will abuse me.
 The child in my lap will be crying, parrot,
 I won't go to sell the buttermilk.

No didi come. Hardinagar is near, parrot;
 Let us sell our buttermilk and soon return home.

Ramula walked one kos, she walked two kos.
 O parrot, the soles of her feet were scorched;
 The tears fell at every step.
 Don't you see, parrot? Ramula was going to sell her butter-
 milk.

Ramula reached the Geru River
 The river was flowing deep, parrot.
 O Geru River, take me to the other side
 The water stood up like walls on either side.
 O parrot, Ramula crossed on dry ground.

After crossing the river, O parrot
 There were no trees, parrot, there was no village to be seen.
 Boy, shall I throw the buttermilk into the river?

O bhauji,¹ let us have our bhanwar² here.

Ramula stood below the sandal tree and thought,
 O boy, till today you called me didi
 But today you call me bhauji.

¹ Bhauji, elder sister-in-law, a term of as great familiarity as didi is of respect. Its use implies that the youth expected intimate relations and even marriage.

² Bhanwar, the technical term for the most important part of the marriage ceremony when bride and groom go round the sacred pole together.

O girl, the boy you kept for food-wages,
Give him a gift for his services.
Today I have got you at last.
If our bhanwar is not done today
I will cut your throat and lay your head on the ground.

Go boy go to the village and bring an axe and spade
So we can have a little hut nearby.
When you have built it, you'll have to work twelve years more
Then I'll do the bhanwar with you.

O parrot, he has gone to the village for an axe and spade.
Ramula picked up the pot
And threw the buttermilk into the river;
The river flowed with buttermilk, parrot,
Flowed down to where her husband was grazing the buffaloes.

How comes buttermilk of my own buffaloes
Flowing down the river, parrot?
As the buffaloes heard him they struck their heads on the
ground and wept.
The she-buffaloes said to their lords and children, Come
Our little Ramula is in trouble.

The buffaloes walked eight days and nine nights, parrot
But yet they did not reach Ramula,
But as the shadow of the tenth day drew nigh
The buffaloes found little Ramula, parrot.

When Ramula saw her buffaloes, she cried aloud and wept.
Her tears were big as pearls, parrot.
They cried, O daughter what has befallen you
That you should throw the buttermilk into the river?

The boy we kept for food-wages
That same fellow has asked me to marry him.

The buffaloes said—Did you hear them, parrot?—
O daughter, the Rawat boy, your Raja, is approaching.

Who hurt you, Rani, who drove you from the house?
My father-in-law troubled me, he sent me to sell buttermilk.
This boy whom we kept on food-wages
Has become my life's enemy.

In a moment the buffaloes dug a pit
They put him in upside down and buried him, parrot.
They took the girl on the path for home.
As she reached the Geru River she began to weep loudly.

The water stands up on one side, parrot
The water stands up on the other;
In the midst was an empty place.
Look, parrot, through the empty place Ramula has crossed the
river
And after her the buffaloes have crossed.

Now her Raja reaches the river
And suddenly the river throws its waves upon him.
O parrot, he is struggling in the water.
Come back, my maiden, and help me cross the river;
At least take me across the river.

From one bank calls the maiden, her Raja from the other.
The Raja sinks for he has done the sin of murder.
He comes up, then sinks down again.
Where he went down the water became shallow.
At last the Raja crossed the river and his love saluted him.
O yoke-fellow, go back to your Palace
I will not come with you
For your father always troubles me;
You must care for the child of my lap.

Come, come; maiden, I will not abuse you,
Come, I will keep you in the house
And I will turn my father out.

In front went the buffaloes, parrot
Behind was the maiden
In the midst the Raja walked.
They went one kos, they went two kos, parrot
They reached the boundary of their village.
As they passed the boundary, parrot
The panther and the tiger saluted Ramula.

When the Raja reached home, he collected the buffaloes
And put the girl in the midst of them.
He went into the house and asked his father, parrot,
Where is your daughter-in-law?

Son, she is your wife, she is like an arrow of Bengal
She dropped her baby on the floor and ran away.

Now the Raja's wrath spread like fire from heel to forehead
The fire mounted to his forehead, parrot.

When he heard it, the Raja sent for men to dig;
He had a well dug before the house—did you see it, parrot?
When it was ready, there he buried his father
Head downwards he buried him, he buried him straight
downwards

He smoothed the ground above him;
He lit a lamp there, parrot.
He went to the village and said to the neighbours,
Come and escort my wife to her house.

The neighbours sang auspicious songs, parrot
And brought the maid into the house;
Above the father's grave they set her down and bathed her,
With hot and cold water the neighbour women bathed her.
After the bath, parrot, she sought her little child
And found him sleeping in the swing.
Ramula woke him and with joy kissed his cheeks, parrot.
Live, my baby, we have soon met again
In the world there is worse sorrow than this.
She took him in her lap and gave him her breast
And after that she fed her husband, didn't you see it, parrot?

THE STORY OF BAI LAHESARI AND BABU DABEL SINGH

A SUA BALLAD

Tari nār nāna re dāda eh ho nāri nāna
Bhala sua re eh ho nāri nāna

It is the first month, O Dewantin, it is the second month
Shade of the fifth month falls and you can eat Sidhauri.¹
Shade of the ninth month falls and the one mango divides
in two.

The little girl Lahesari, O father, has been born.
On the day Lahesari was born, that very day was born Dabel
Singh.

In his court a spear was planted
They were betrothed that very day
Betel nut was broken for the girl
Chatti was kept for her and the Barhi was observed.
After the Barhi² came a message from the bridegroom's house.

Now little daughter Lahesari is being married
Her friends of equal age are asked to make the booth
The Dosi³ is summoned to test the omens.
Babu Dabel Singh has arrived for his marriage
He and his mother are escorted to the house
They are tied together, their mother ties their clothes together.
After she has tied them she takes them round the pole
They are sitting now in their mothers' laps for tika⁴
After the bhanwar they assemble for the feast
When the feast is over the groom's marriage-party quickly
runs away.

A year passes, two years, three years
In the twelfth year the maiden desires to visit the lake.
Says her mother, Don't go daughter, I beg you not to go.
When I was a child I always listened to my mother's plead-
ings.

¹ Sidhauri, a ceremonial meal given to a woman in the fifth month of her pregnancy.

² Chatti and Barhi are ceremonies after the birth of a child.

³ Master of Ceremonies at a wedding.

⁴ Ceremonial greeting of bride and bridegroom by relatives and friends.

O father, I must go to bathe in the lake.

She asks her father, she asks her elder uncle, she asks her younger uncle;

She asks her brother, her brother's wife. I must go to the lake.

Seven maids walk ahead and seven maids behind

Her gundri is of silver, her kalsa is of gold.¹

She walks through the Lion Gate, she is going to the lake

She walks one kos, she walks two kos, yet she hasn't reached the lake.

She climbs a tree to see how far away it is

The twice seven maids climb also to see how far it is.

There it is, didi, there you can see it.

From the tree the maids come down and go on to the lake

They reach it when they have walked five kos.

She puts down the gudri and kalsa at the edge of the water

And now she is breaking the datun² of sandal.

Babu Dabel Singh has come to hunt

He is sitting on a stone by the side of the lake.

Get off the stone, brother, move away a little.

The girl speaks one word, the girl speaks two words.

Get off the stone, brother, move away a little.

Babu Dabel Singh turns his red red eyes on her.

At my father's house boys like you are kept for cutting grass.

At my father's house jutihi³ girls like you are kept to fill ghursi.

Jutaha like you are kept to groom the horses and to get their fodder.

Jutihi like you are used at my home to throw away the rubbish and to break up cowpats.

Babu Dabel Singh stares again with red red eyes and snarls

He begins to tremble in his rage.

She says, Go go my maids go and call my brother

Tell my brother some boy from somewhere or other

Is insulting your didi.

¹ The gundri is a roll of cloth or twisted straw placed on the head below a water-pot to keep it steady. A kalsa is a pot, often with a lamp burning on its mouth.

² Datun, a twig used for cleaning the teeth.

³ The scorn implied in this word is derived from the Indian dislike and fear of things used by other people. It might be translated 'leavings', 'wastage' or 'damaged goods'.

Gadbad gadbad the girls ran back to the Raja's Palace.

O brother, listen, my brother, a fellow from somewhere or other

Is insulting didi. So they told the story.

Bir Singh Raja trembled *dal dal dal dal*.

Bury him upside down, light a lamp above him!

This is my only sister, who dares to insult her?

Says the father, Not so my son; call the Brahmins and let us read the books

Call for the Brahmins and get the court coudunged.

The Brahmins came and sat in the coudunged courtyard;
They read the earth, they read the sky, they read the four corners of the world.

No no Raja this is only your own darling son-in-law who is sitting on the stone.

Go maids go and bring the little girl home

Go and tell her he is our darling son-in-law

Go, go, with him she has a right to quarrel.

Gadbad gadbad ran the girls back to the lake.

Come come, didi, it is only bato.

When she heard the word bato she lowered her head;

She went to the other side and bathed there.

Angry angry the boy got up and went to his home.

The maid thought in her mind and asked questions of her heart;

When she had bathed she went home

She walked five kos and reached the palace.

Dabel Singh went home and called the marriage-party

He brought drums and made his house ready.

The elephants and horses are ready, they have started

They went one kos, they went two kos, they went four kos.

When the maid heard the music she cried,

O listen, father, to the litter of tears

Send it back again to my sasural¹.

But, my daughter, how can I send the litter of tears away?

The maid thinks in her mind, she goes to her elder uncle,

She goes to her younger uncle, to her brother, to her mother.

To her aunts, her brother's wife, and each says in turn,

How can we send away this litter of tears?

¹ We have kept the Hindi word *sasural*, father-in-law's house, because of its many and ambivalent associations.

The marriage-party has come
 They are camping in the garden and the park
 Our darling son-in-law is here escorted to the house.

Dabel Singh enters the court and his feet are washed
 The Rani falls at his feet. Come and take pej¹ and water.

I will take no food, I will drink no water
 Today I must return, I will come to feast tomorrow;
 Let us go quickly. They are doing her hair, they put on all
 her ornaments.

She greets her elder uncle, she greets her younger uncle,
 Her father, her mother, her brother, her brother's wife,
 She salutes them all down to the very youngest and gets into
 the litter.

The farewells are over, she goes out of the village
 They go one kos, they go two kos, they cross the boundary of
 his mother's house.

Put down the litter. *Tar tar* he trembles
 He takes her from the litter and removes her clothes and
 ornaments

He dresses her in old clothes and makes her walk on foot.
 Dabel Singh is on his horse, little girl Lahesari is walking
 behind.

She thinks in her mind, I did not listen brother,
 I took no advice and now I am paid for talking too much.
 The party reaches the town, the Rani comes to greet them
 The Rani comes with golden lamp burning with a silver wick.

Come come, my mother, do not receive her
 Give her a sickle, send her to cut grass.

So little girl Lahesari is sent with a sickle to cut grass
 She brings bundles for the house, she throws away the cowdung
 She sweeps the path, she throws away the rubbish.
 All the maid's work is done by little girl Lahesari
 And yet they give her no proper food to eat.

Her hands and feet are tied, she is put in the pigsty
 The rice-water is poured into a wooden trough
 She cannot eat or drink it, she gets thin as a twig
 One day passes, two days, pass the days of a month.

¹ Pej is the staple food of the aborigines in the Maikal Hills, a gruel of grain boiled in water.

An old woman goes that way, the girl calls to her,
Go mother and take a message to brother Bir Singh Raja :
Your little sister may die today, may die tomorrow.
Come and see her face once more. Take this message, mother.
I'll give you a gold mohur, only take the message quickly.

When she heard it the old woman ran *gadbad gadbad*
One kos she went, two kos she went, till she reached the Raja's
court.

Raja O Raja, what hard sorrow for Lahesari !
She may die today, tomorrow, come to see her face once more.

When Bir Singh Raja hears it he trembles *tar tar*
His eyes grow red, his eyebrows arch like bows.
Go go Ghasia bring my horse and saddle it.

He speaks *kad kad* to his father
I am going to bring my sister home
If she is still alive I'll bring her on my horse.

When the Ghasia saddled the horse, the Raja leapt upon its
back

He gave a mohur to the old woman and took her on the horse.
He went one kos, he went two kos, and came to the boundary ;
There he put down the old woman.
Go go and tell the girl that her brother has come.

Bir Singh has reached the town, he has dismounted in the
court ;

He is standing there with his bridle in his hand.

When Dabel Singh sees him he trembles *tar tar* and says,
Johar.

Go go my sister put on your best clothes and ornaments
And so adorned go out to meet Lahesari's brother.

The sister comes out to meet Bir Singh Raja weeping ;
She weeps one word, she weeps two and three.
Keep quiet, little girl, and go and send my sister
Or with my sword I'll cut you into pieces.

Dabel Singh calls the Beldar and has a passage made
From the pigsty to the house, a passage under ground,
From the sty to the kitchen and so he brought her home.
She was bathed in warm water, she was bathed in cold

She was dressed in her best clothes and ornaments.
Her hair was braided and she wore all the ornaments of her mother's house.

With all her ornaments Lahesari came out and wept *dhar dhar*.

She went to her brother. You have come to see me, brother, may you live long.

She wept her sadness to him. What torture I have suffered here!

If they catch me again in this house, they'll bury me alive.
As he heard the tale he trembled and the earth quaked beneath him.

Bir Singh caught his horse and put his sister on its back,
Bir Singh gave them no salute as he mounted his horse,
He mounted his horse and rode away with Bai Lahesari.

May fire burn the father-in-law's house. Brother, I'll never go there

I am your only sister, I'll live with you always

In your house I will grow old.

On the horse brother and sister wept together.

Sister, I wish I had died rather than that you had this trouble.

Lahesari comes to the house, she meets her father and her mother;

She meets her elder uncle, her younger uncle, her brother's wife and all the little ones.

They bathe her in water hot and cold

Her brother's wife brings her food.

O bhauji, how I suffered!

May fire burn my father-in-law's house. I will grow old in my own mother's home.

When she had eaten and drunk the girl went to her attic.

Brother Bir Singh called her maids and told them to rock her in the swing.

Now she will stay for ever in her mother's house.

As she found happiness, so may we find it at last.

The singers live in a world unknown to the geographer.
Every river is Ganga-Jamna; every town is Muttranagar or Brindaban. Hiragarh is the City of Diamonds; Hardinagar is the City of Turmeric with a thousand associations to the

marriage ceremony. Raiyya Sindhola has no place in the maps of the Ordinance Survey, nor has Bara Bathi Bengala—that sinister land of magic which it would be uncharitable to associate with modern Bengal. The forest visited by the singers of these songs is not divided up into coupes or marked for rotational fellings. It is the Madhuban, the Forest of Honey; Chandanban, the Forest of Sandal; Kajliban, the mysterious forest of enchantment about which no one can tell much. There is the deep pool of the Koeli River; there are the seven rivers and the sixteen streams and the great *samundar*, the tank or lake which a hero has to cross. This is the world of diamonds and honey into which the Gond and Pardhan singer can escape with the aid of the rhythm of the drum and the sweet music of his songs.

SAILA SONGS

which may either be Harauni—the type performed when two villages are in contest—or Bharauni—more commonly danced at a marriage, is a development of the introduction, a straightforward 'round' with a large variety of steps, accompanied by songs that are rather staccato and abrupt. The dancers form into a complete circle, contract and expand facing inwards, wheel round and move out and in skipping and jumping. They again make a line and each circles round his neighbour. They hop on each foot and turn in the air, throw up their arms, bend to the ground and swing them through their feet. In the 'Dance of the Lame Hunter', they advance stamping, bending down low with one arm outstretched and touching the ground.

A typical Bharauni Thadi song is as follows:—

52

Tarinaki na more nānāre nāna
Tari nāna na more nāna jogire
Hātema dharale rāmtengari pīthe mrigchhāla jogire
Janamina lethai more bābāre bairāgi jogire.

TAKE a Ram-stick in your hand, a deer-skin on your back
 And so take the form of a Bairagi-Jogi.

The Lahaki Saila generally takes the same form, but is done with more speed and vigour. A Jhulania Lahaki song, of which we will now give an example, is sung with a swinging movement and rather sentimentally.

53



Tarināke nāmore nānāre nāna
Tarināna more nāna re tarināna more nāna
Chalwo sālī chalwo sālī hārīl dekhela jābore
Hārīl dekhela jābo
Nahi jāu bāto nahi jāu bhāto
Bhaiya gālī dehi jo bhaiyā gālī dehi
Tor bhaiyāla mānd piyāhu
Tola leyi jāhu wo tolā leyi jāhu.

COME my wife's little sister
 Come, to see the green pigeon
 Let's go to see the green pigeon
 I daren't go, bato, I daren't go
 My brother will abuse me
 I will give your brother liquor
 And then I'll take you away.

The Shikar Saila is a vigorous and exciting dance that imitates the hunting of a deer. The men form a long line and most of them carry sticks to represent guns. There is a lot of stamping and gesticulation; at one point the party squats down and takes aim with the sticks; at another they creep slowly forward; then they jump up and dance on with the left foot forward, the body forward over it and the right leg in the air. Sometimes the head of the line chases the tail, sometimes a boy pretends to be the deer.

54

Tarināke nāmore nānāre tari nāna more nāna
Udro bhuli pej pile sāmbar kheda jābo
Bhatela mār lābo.

COME dog and drink your gruel
 Let us go to hunt the sambhar
 (At least) let us kill a hare and bring it home.

The Dhimra-Gath Saila is a round game in which each dancer catches hold of his predecessor's loin-cloth, and the line slowly winds itself up by threading through itself into a fisherman's knot.

The Goddami Saila imitates a railway train. After the line of dancers has been round a sufficient number of times, it halts and each man hooks his left leg into a sort of loop formed by the leg and arm of the man behind him. When they are all hooked up they dance round on one leg, moving in line like a train.

55

Tari nānare nāna tari nāri ga
Rel gādi pahiya dolai dhapel ga rel gādi
Janamina lethai rāja angrej ga rel gādi
Pahiya dolai dhapel ga rel gādi.

THE rails tremble as the train goes by
 The birth of the train is of the Raja English
 The rails tremble as the train goes by.

The Atari Saila is the most picturesque and dramatic of the Saila variations; we have seen the same dance, though with other interpretations of its meaning, among the Parja-Dhurwa, the Ghotul Muria of Bastar, the Didai Parja of Orissa and in the Dangs of western India. It is no doubt widely distributed. The men form a large double circle, the taller and stronger being on the inside. Each clasps his neighbour's arms. After they have danced round for a time, the inner circle squats down, and the outer circle climbs onto its shoulders. As they are squatting they dance slowly round and then rise into the air with loud cries. The whole circle then circulates slowly, the men below swinging their buttocks from side to side.

This dance has various interpretations. By some it is said to represent an attic at the top of a house, from which a pretty girl looks down. The Baiga say it imitates the cutting of *dahi*—the lopping of branches from the tops of trees to spread over the fields. Others say it represents the way the Lamana hoist up sacks that have fallen from their bullocks. Whatever it means the Atari dance always causes a lot of excitement, and girls run to watch it.

56

Tari nāna more nāna
Atāri ma god jhulāy wāri ke nanado
Janamina lethai re jhulāwai wāri ke nanado
Atāri ma god jhulāy.

My darling nanand is swinging her legs in the attic
 I see it in my mind—my darling nanand is swinging
 She is swinging her legs in the attic.

Other movements of the dance with which special songs are not associated are these—

The Baithak Saila. A very vigorous stamping dance. The men stamp twice with the left foot, then twice with the right. Then they squat down and hop round and round. They halt and sing, then go on again, turn round and hop

back, and finally break up and go hopping all over the place in wild confusion.

The Chakramar Saila. This imitates the movements of a lizard. The party squats down and hops from one side to another. Each extends his right leg fully behind him and moves his body to and fro in a wriggling movement like a lizard. Then the right leg is waved right round forward and back under the left leg to its original position.

The Chamka Kudna Saila. This is supposed to be like a deer jumping to get out of a trap. Each dancer takes a stick, and after the usual preliminaries, holds it in both hands in front of him. He bends low swinging to and fro, stands up and dances round, bends down again, then suddenly jumps through his hands over the stick, dances round with the stick now held behind him, jumps back. The dance ends with everyone jumping independently, in a way that certainly resembles the movements of a frightened deer.

The Saila, in fact, is a form of physical exercise and drill that can take endless varieties and forms. The songs are usually short and rather monotonous. A few are 'progressive' in character, sometimes going on to a highly vulgar conclusion.

In nearly every Saila, generally in the latter part of the song, the dancers use a curious expression—*janamina lethai*—which means literally 'it has taken birth'. To understand the meaning of this we must give the legend of the origin of the Saila dance current in south-east Mandla. When the world was made all the gods and goddesses went to look at it. As they travelled from west to east they came to Bara Bathi Bengala, a country we meet again in the Hirakhan epic. These Bengalis used to turn all who sang or danced into goats and sacrifice them to the gods. When the gods and goddesses came to that country the Bengalis refused to give them anywhere for their camp. It was raining hard and so the party sheltered under a siuna tree and talked for a long while how they were to see Bara Bathi Bengala. Sharada and Sarseti were there and they taught them how to deceive the Bengalis. 'Decorate yourselves', they said, 'with peacock's feathers and go dancing to that country. The girls of every village will be so excited about you that they will ask you to remain for four days.' The gods did this and were allowed to stay in that country for a time. Thence they came to Amarkantak.

Here Rewa Naik was camping with his nine lakhs of

bullocks laden with myrabolams. When he saw the dancers he thought they were robbers and told them that his bullocks were laden with gold mohurs which he offered to give them if they would spare his life. When he opened his sacks he found they really were full of gold and he made a great temple in honour of the Narbada with the money.

Now the girls of Bengal followed the dancers all the way to Amarkantak and the Bengalis chased them and tried to take them back. When they refused to go they turned the girls into stones which still may be seen in the forest near Barbaspur in Mandla District.

In the same jungle under Dhuti Hill the twelve Gond brothers were hunting. Their turbans had fallen off and they had put peacock's feathers in their hair instead. When Sharada and Sarseti saw the Gond brothers they thought that they were the other gods disguised as dancers and they taught them every kind of dance. Even so the Gond brothers were not able to dance properly but they went *matak matak*, jogging their bodies, to their home. Their old father said, 'You have come very late (*selse*)'.

After this the real divine dancers used to come often to the place and possess the bodies of the Gond dancers so that they danced in divine fashion. The dance itself was called Saila because it had made the brothers late for their work as it does even today. The expression *janamina lethai* refers to the birth of the gods in the bodies of the dancers and suggests, what every witness of the dance will have noticed, that the performers really are inspired just as if they were magicians celebrating a mystery.

Since the dancers are possessed by the gods during the Saila it is said that no witch can injure them at this time by her magic and that nothing ever can tire or weary the singers. 'The dancers' legs remain fresh however hard they dance.'

The delight and excitement of a village visited by a party of dancers is shown in the following Saila song :—

57

Nari nāna ri nāna O tari hara nāna.

THE music of the drums has filled the ten quarters of the world
The nine hundred Baghel Gond are dancing
This village was on a hill and under the hill lived the rats
When they heard the music even the rats danced in the water

Two parrots with red beaks danced with them in the water
 The rats by their dancing made foam on the water
 Down to the spring came the water-girls
 The rats had caught a tiger
 The girls excited watched the fight
 Hiding behind twigs and leaves
 What was happening up on the hill?
 Even the cooking-pots were dancing *sai sai*
 Smoke went up into the roof
 One little girl with oval face
 Went out to fetch water
 And a boy with a monkey's nose
 Carried her away.

Tari nāna tewo tari nāna

They were wearing long skirts
 They were dancing to the very edge of Daugarh
 Where even prostitutes were invited
 They taught the Saila to others
 And their songs excited the girls with three braids in their hair
 They sung one Saila after another.
 The Saila looked as if a Raja had come with his army
 There were nine hundred soldiers
 Nine hundred Baghel Gond were dancing
 Some were playing *kati kati*
 Their urine ran down the hillside as if there was a flood
 It was like the marriage of a Gond and Gondin
 But there was no giving and taking that day
 There was fire in the ghursi
 But they would not even give dung cakes to the Saila boys
 There were pigs in the styes
 But they only gave the boys gruel.
 Why don't you cook aconite and poison us as a mother-in-law
 would?
 But a girl was giving her lover venison
 In a corner of the house where none could see.

Nari nāna ri nāna O tari hara nāna.

Alfred Williams gives an interesting account of similar singing competitions, though in this case unaccompanied by dancing, formerly practised in England. It was common, years ago, during wet weather, when labour out of doors was

at a standstill, for the rustics to assemble at the inns and have singing matches, in order to see—not which could sing best, but which could sing most. 'There were seldom more than two competing upon any one day. And usually there was no chance for but one of them to sing. He commonly issued a challenge to the village, or the neighbourhood, and declared himself able and willing to sing continuously for twelve hours—from morning till night—and to have a fresh piece each time. It consequently took two days to decide the match. Of course, the inns were full of spectators. They were the daymen on the farms. Under the influence of Apollo they left their work, and had no thought of returning until their musical appetite had been satisfied. All the pieces were to be sung from memory. It was something of a treat for the audience. Many of them strained their ears for new pieces and went not away disappointed. Doubtless the singers got very tired, and the music grated, before the twelve hours were up. But they were very strong and had voices like organs, while their throats were lubricated with frequent draughts of ale.'

¹ Williams, *op. cit.*, 14.

SAILA SONGS

58

Tari nānāre more

WHY is the water in the well

Splashing *lijak-lijar*?

Is it the fair girl who has come for water?

For in the well there is no bucket

And in the well there is no rope.

59

Tari nānāre nāna

My Raja, sit on the bed

For today Sakhil Dauna will be born

My Raja, sit on the bed.

This is interpreted as referring to an incident when a husband has returned from a long journey to find his wife about to give birth to a son whose name she has been told in a dream is to be Sakhil Dauna.

60

GAJABEL, Gajabel

Your flowers come out in clusters

But when my arhar pulse is born

Its flowers will be like yours.

The Gajabel is one of the many types of ceremonial friendship. It is actually the name of a creeper.

61

Tarihari nāna nānāre nāna

HE went to fetch mangoes from the forest

He threw his stick into the tree

But it hit her little finger O

And in her wrist she felt the pain.

He threw his stick into the tree
 But it hit her on the wrist O
 And in her elbow she felt the pain.

He threw his stick into the tree
 But it hit her on her knee O
 And in her thigh she felt the pain . . .
Nānāre nāna nānāre nāna

62

O GIRL, go grind beneath the distant mango tree
 There is the grinding-stone
 Grind, and make your brother grind with you
 There is, a swing
 Swing and make your brother swing with you
 There is a bed
 Sleep and make your brother sleep with you . . .

63

O BROTHER, get up, a scorpion has bitten me
 Brother, get up and stop the pain.

What will you give me in return?

I will give you the ring on my finger
 Brother, get up and stop the pain.

What will I do with the ring on your finger
 When I have neither home nor wife?

I will give you the bangle from my wrist
 Brother, get up and stop the pain . . .

The word 'brother' in this and the preceding song is meant literally only as a naughty joke: the word is often used in the sense of 'friend'.

64

Tari nāna mor nāna re nāna
Tari nāna mor nāna
 THE Raja-Jogi is like this
 Never trust fire and water
 For their ways are strange

Beware of them
For they have little love
From them is born the Prince.

65

Tari ke na mor nānāre nāna
FRIEND, you are always laughing
The peacock dances in your braided hair
Friend, you are always laughing.

Compare No. 29. But here the 'braided hair' seems to have a reference to marriage and may suggest that the girl addressed is already the wife of someone else.

66

Tari nākena mor nānāre nāna tari nāna mor nāna
Down the narrow way Sukhia goes for water
In the middle of the path she stops to smile.

This little Saila song, repeated over and over again during the dance, has an economy and natural beauty characteristic of Pahari painting.

RIDDLE SONGS

THE Dhanda Saila is a very interesting type of dance. The song consists of a riddle, which is sung over and over again until the village challenged can answer it, whereupon the answer is often embodied in the song. The dance is of the basic Saila type, but includes movements intended to illustrate the riddle. The dance thus becomes a sort of charade.

67

Tari nāke na mor nānāre nāna
Tari nāna mor nāna
Kāri chirai ke kāri khodro kāri charan bar jay
Patthar chadke pāni piwai dola chad ghar ay
Janamina lethai nauwa ghar tura āy.

THE black bird has a black nest
It feeds on the black grass
It climbs on a stone to drink water
It comes home in a litter
In a barber's house it is born as a boy.

The answer to this, which is not given in the song, is—A razor.

68

Tari nāke na mor nānāre nāna
Tari nāna mor nāna
Jangal chād bakulaya bina jibh ke chara charai
Pāni piyat mar jāy
Janamina lethai mor pāwak deo ay.

THE crane climbs up the mountain
And feeds on grass without a tongue
It dies when it drinks water
It is the god Fire.

69

TARI Hill is very steep
Whence the pure water comes

Like mist the water
Comes to earth from heaven.

There is a wonder we have not seen before
Bullocks are coming. On four pillars are four horns
Wise man, solve this riddle.

There is another wonder we have not seen before
A Jogi is coming. Without hands or feet
He goes a thousand kos.

There is a third wonder we have not seen before
A deer is coming. It jumps north south east west
In a moment it jumps.

There is a fourth wonder we have not seen before
An elephant is coming
It eats from its backside.

Wise man, solve the riddle. If you're really wise, you'll
answer
If you're stupid get up and go away
Salute the poet, our Sahib is very learned
From the beginning we sing in his name.

The answers to these four 'wonders' are not given in the
song.

70

SLOWLY slowly runs the quail
Friend you will be defeated
In twelve forts you have twelve girls
In thirteen forts your name is ruined
Each of the girls has ears twelve fingers long
In each ear are two gold bridles
Tell me the meaning friend
Or you will lose the game.

Unfortunately as with many of the riddles that are used
as songs rather than simply as a test of wit, no one can
remember what the answer is.

71

To Kajliban I go
 To Brindaban I go
 Trusting in God
 The sky is my mother and father
 The earth is my camping-ground
 A flower blossoms
 Without branch or leaves.

This is—The sun.

72

IN Chunukpur there was a theft
 In Chutukpur the thief was caught
 In Gaddipur the thief was tried
 In Nakhunpur he was executed.

Chunukpur is the hair, in which a louse is stealing. Chutukpur represents the two fingers with which it was caught, the *chutuk* being the noise made by snapping the fingers. Gaddipur is the palm of the hand. Nakhunpur stands for the nails between which the thief was squashed to death.

Asking *brahmodya* or poetical riddles was a very ancient practice in India and formed part of the Ashvamedha horse-sacrifice. Just before the actual smothering of the horse, the Hotri and the Brahmin began to ask riddles, an exercise in which only they were permitted to take part. This ceremonial use of the riddle is found in many parts of the world, and Frazer has suggested that it may have originally been adopted at times when for certain reasons the speaker was forbidden the use of direct terms.¹

Among the aboriginals the custom is found in certain tribes at the beginning of the marriage ceremony. In Gond and Pardhan weddings in Mandla, for example, when the bridegroom's representative goes to fetch the bride, riddles are posed and must be answered before he can take her away.

Among the preliminaries to a Birhor marriage there is also a time when riddles are put and answered. When the bride's party comes to the bridegroom's house, hunting-nets are spread for the guests to sit on. When they are seated, the bridegroom's people ask them, 'What did you see on your

¹ Sir J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, ix, 121.

way here?' The guests reply, 'Oh the way, we met with a girl and asked her, "Where is your father gone?" The girl answered, "My father is gone to catch the rains of the heaven." This meant he had gone to gather thatching-grass. Then we asked her, "Where is your mother gone?" The girl answered, "She is gone to take a dead person inside the house". This meant she had gone to transplant paddy-seedlings as a labourer.'

The bride's people then say, 'O friends! A mango tree bore fruit; an old woman told her husband, "Get me the mango by throwing a stick at it" (meaning, get me rice-beer to drink). The old man threw a stick at it and the mango fell and the stick came down on the other side of the tree striking down a deer as it fell (suggesting, let a goat be slain for our entertainment)'. Men of each party now greet those of the other party and enquire about their health and well-being. Then riddles of a certain type known as *ganamrea bhanita* are asked and solved. For this occasion, five jars of rice-beer were already set abrewing on the return of the three men who had gone to the bride's house for the Takchanrhi ceremony. One of these pots of rice-beer is now brought out to the court, strained, and distributed to the guests. This is called 'the fatigue-removing jar'.¹

In Roy's description of an Oraon marriage he gives one section as Khiri Tengna (propounding riddles). This is the time at which the marriage sermon is given and rice-beer which is called 'riddle-propounding rice-beer', is given to bride and bridegroom, though they must not drink it. The marriage sermon commences with a riddle, but Roy does not make it clear whether during the drinking of the beer riddles are proposed and answered by the guests.²

Mrs. Nora Chadwick points out³ how Tatar and Russian riddles, like the majority of Galla proverbs, are extensively concerned with the universe and natural phenomena. 'These also form a part of the literature of celebration, or, to be more precise, of social ritual. Among Russian peasants in the governments of Yaroslav and Pskov and among the people of Ladakh, riddles are said to have formed a constituent part of the ceremony of betrothal down to last century, the bride

¹ S. C. Roy, *The Birhors* (Ranchi, 1925), 159 f.

² S. C. Roy, *Oraon Religion and Customs* (Ranchi, 1928), 16 ff.

³ N. K. Chadwick, 'The Distribution of Oral Literature in the Old World', *J.R.A.I.*, lxi (1939), 86, where references are given.

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or bridegroom's ability to answer riddles being regarded as a measure of the mental equipment and social qualification for the role of husband or wife, *i.e.*, an 'intelligence test'. Tatar oral literature furnishes numerous examples of the same custom. Riddle-contests are also popular among the Tatars generally, and their literature furnishes many examples of contests between two sages, or between a sage and an ordinary person. In many such instances the relative emphasis on ritual, education or entertainment varies, though the same form of literature may be used in every case.'

The Dhanda Saila songs given above are in the ancient Indian tradition of the wit-combat. Penzer points out that these combats, which sometimes took the form of a series of riddles, were a common feature of entertainments at the courts of Asiatic monarchs.¹ The reader will at once be reminded of the story of the Queen of Sheba who 'came to prove the wisdom of Solomon with hard questions',² of Samson and his riddle, and of the riddle of the Sphinx.

In Indian fiction there is a rather disappointing account of a wit-combat in Somadeva's *Katha Sarit Sagara* where a learned Princess is defeated by Vinitamati. But later this same Vinitamati is himself vanquished in dispute by a Buddhist mendicant. In Parshvanatha's account of Vikrama's adventures as a parrot, there is a well-known series of riddles.³ The story of 'Abu Al-Husn and his Slave-Girl Tawaddud' in *The Arabian Nights* (Burton, Vol. V, pp. 189 ff) is on the same lines.

Two types of tale which turn on the hero's solution of a riddle are generally distinguished. In one the hero gains a princess in marriage by this means: in the other a prisoner saves himself from death by setting a riddle that his judges cannot solve.⁴ F. J. Norton has recently studied this second motif in great detail in the pages of *Folk-Lore*.⁵

A Gond story from Mandla illustrate the first type of tale,

¹ Penzer, *op. cit.*, vi, 74 f.

² The riddles of the Queen of Sheba have been extensively discussed in literature. See W. A. Clouston, *Flowers from a Persian Garden* (London, 1890), 218 and 273.

³ See M. Bloomfield, 'On the Art of Entering Another's Body', *Proc. Amer. Phil. Soc.*, lvi, 31 ff.

⁴ A. Aarne and S. Thompson, *The Types of the Folk-tale* (Helsinki, 1928), 128 and 139.

⁵ F. J. Norton, 'Prisoner who Saved his Neck with a Riddle', *Folk-Lore*, liii, 27 ff.

though the heroine is not a Princess nor is a marriage the result achieved.

A girl longed to sleep with her husband's younger brother. But he was afraid of his brother and refused. At last after she had begged him to come to her for many days, he said, 'I will only come if you bring me the milk of a fly, the pith of a reed, a headless goat, a one-legged quail and let me come to you riding on a horse without eyes'. The girl tried and tried to find these things, but could get nothing. At last she went to a clever Malin who at once solved the riddle. 'The milk of a fly', she said, 'is honey, the pith of a reed is sugar-cane, the headless goat is parched barra, the one-legged quail is a brinjal and the horse without eyes is a pair of sandals.' When the girl told her lover the answer to his riddle, he was compelled to yield to her desire and went to her.

Another Mandla story shows how a clever boy redeems a debt by setting the family creditor a riddle he cannot solve.

A Brahmin went to beg at the house of a Gond. Everyone was away in the field except a little boy. When the Brahmin asked where the family was, the boy replied, 'Mother has gone to turn one into two, and if she has come she won't come. Father has gone to stop the flow of the heavens. Brother has gone to earn abuse from the passers-by. I am examining one and thus know everything.' The Brahmin was unable to understand what the boy meant, and agreed that, if he could explain the riddles, it would show that the Gond were more learned than the Brahmin. The boy explained that 'My mother has gone to make dal out of gram, and due to the flooded river even if she has come, she won't come. Father has gone to cut grass, brother has gone to make a fence of thorns across a path and thus earn abuse from the travellers. I myself am cooking rice, and by tasting one grain can know whether or no the rest is ready.'

There is a charming use of a riddle in love-making in an anonymous poem from Cotgrave's *Wit's Interpreter* (1655) quoted in Norman Ault's *Seventeenth Century Lyrics*.

Down in a garden sat my dearest Love,
Her skin more soft and white than down of swan,
More tender-hearted than the turtle-dove,
And far more kind than bleeding pelican.
I courted her; she rose and blushing said,

'Why was I born to live and die a maid?'
 With that I plucked a pretty marigold,
 Whose dewy leaves shut up when day is done.
 'Sweeting,' I said, 'arise, look and behold,
 A pretty riddle I'll to thee unfold:
 These leaves shut in as close as cloistered nun,
 Yet will they open when they see the sun.'
 'What mean you by this riddle, sir?' she said,
 'I pray expound it.' Then I thus began:
 'Know maids are made for men, man for a maid.'
 With that she changed her colour and grew wan:
 'Since that this riddle you so well unfold,
 Be you the sun, I'll be the marigold.'

An earlier riddle by Sir Thomas Wyatt in Tottel's *Miscellany* (1557) is more in the direct manner of the Saila songs.

Vulcan begat me: Minerva me taught:
 Nature, my mother: Craft nourisht me year by year:
 Three bodies are my foode: my strength is in naught.
 Anger, wrath, waste, and noise are my children dear.
 Guess, friend, what I am: and how I am wrought:
 Monster of sea, or of land, or of elsewhere.
 Know me, and use me: and I may thee defend:
 And if I be thine enemy, I may thy life end.

The answer is—A gun.¹

¹ A considerable collection of Indian riddles, with comment by W. G. Archer, Durga Bhagvat and Verrier Elwin, will be found in 'An Indian Riddle Book', *Man in India*, xxiii, Part iv. For rhymed riddles which present some analogies to those printed in the text, see M. Longworth Dames, *Popular Poetry of the Baloches* (London, 1907), 195 ff.

DANDA SAILA SONGS

73

BHAUJI, how I long for a mate
Says the nanand to her bhauji
If you put your hand in his pocket
You'll find no money there
Lovely girl, aren't you ashamed?
Says the dewar, Even if we walk close together
Why should we be ashamed?

Guests have come to your house, goodwife
Bring us water in a pot.

Where is my wife?
She is going to have a child
Send for the midwife, send for the nurse
What knife did they use to cut the cord?
What broken pot for her bath?
The cord was cut with a golden knife
She was bathed with a silver pot.

74

HE has his own village
Full of tenants
So crowded
That each roof joins the neighbour's
The streets are full
Of bullock-carts set end to end
Even the Kotwar on his rounds
Rides through the market on a horse
There are so many people
That they sleep in the stables
There are so many spears
That many rust for lack of use
The widows wear bangles and neckbands
And even the coolies
Have horses in their stables.

A newly-married bride is boasting to her family about the wealth and importance of her husband. As indicating what the aboriginal considers significant the song is interesting, and may be compared to the description of Hiragarh in the epic of Hirakhan Kshattri.

DANDA AND SAILA SEASONAL SONGS

THE idea of writing poetry about the months or seasons of the year is rather an obvious one and has been attempted by many poets since Horace wrote his great Ode. An Italian poet Folgore Da San Geminiano wrote a series of sonnets to the club of Sienese noblemen which is mentioned scornfully by Dante. These sonnets, although addressed to a company of licentious youths, are remarkable for their freedom from sexual suggestiveness and refer chiefly to the physical and material comforts that the seasons of the year can bring. Thus February offers gallant sport; March gives plenteous fisheries; there are horses and games in May, falconry in September, magnificent feasts in the winter months. Spenser's *The Shepherds Calender* is more concerned with love, sometimes of an unconventional kind. Thomson wrote, not according to the months but to the four main seasons, and he chiefly emphasizes the descriptive aspects of the changing year and its philosophic interpretation. William Morris uses the different months as a means of introducing the stories in his *Earthly Paradise* and achieves some fine descriptive writing in his account of them.

In India seasonal songs lend themselves to the long drawn-out music of the Stick and Parrot Dances. W. G. Archer has recorded some remarkable Chaumasa, a cycle of songs to cover the six months of the rainy season, which are sung during the rains by upper-caste Hindu women in Bihar. These songs are far more frankly concerned with sex than are any of the poems to which we have referred. The same may be said of the Kajali songs, in almost all of which 'the theme is one of sexual fancy' and the Barsati which is another name for Kajali and differs only in having a more frequent emphasis on the season. The underlying note of the Chaumasa songs is sexual frustration which is always specially connected with the rains.¹ The Pardhan songs also are not unconcerned with sexual frustration and desire, but they are less detailed on this subject and resemble in some ways the Western descriptive tradition.

The Gond and Pardhan have now adopted the Hindu

¹ See W. G. Archer, *The Wedding of the Writers* and 'Seasonal Songs in Patna District' in *Man in India*, xxii.

calendar. Their months do not correspond exactly with the European months and are therefore printed so as to indicate how they overlap.

PART OF JANUARY	MAGH
FEBRUARY	PHAGUN
MARCH	CHAIT
APRIL	BAISAKH
MAY	JETH
JUNE	ASADH
JULY	SAWAN
AUGUST	BHADON
SEPTEMBER	KUAR
OCTOBER	KARTIK
NOVEMBER	AGHAN
DECEMBER	PUS
PART OF JANUARY	

75

Nāna ho hari nāno ho rām

O FRIEND, in Chait my son was born
 The *chok* was smeared with sandal paste
 And bordered with elephant pearls
 The pitcher was of gold
 But if my brother had been here
 He would have lit his own golden lamp
 And with joy brought my baby gifts.

Friend, the month of Chait is done
 Now Baisakh is here
 The heat rains down
 Our bodies have grown hot as iron
 Yet even in this heat my brother
 Has gone to bring his wife.

Baisakh descends, Jeth rises up
The wind comes
As though heat itself were blowing.
But then comes Asadh
The clouds appear with thunder
The first rain falls
The birds sing again
And the peacock cries in the forest
The old bullocks are afraid
For there will be work to do
And the poor farm-labourers
Are more frightened than the bullocks
The farmers throw their seed
Madly about the fields
The doves and pigeons
Break the seeds and eat them.

In Sawan it is easier to plough
The tiny fish invade the fields
And jump about for water
The rain comes down in little drops
Yet the farmers are always wet.

Now comes Bhadon when it is always midnight
And the darkness is greater for the flashing lightning
No one is sure whether her husband will return by evening
Tell me, will my love come or no?

Kuar is surrounded by the sun
I said to my husband
Sleep away from me
It is too hot for it
Give up for the time the work of the mattress
Lie down, my Raja, I will fan you
Don't plough any more
Lean the ploughshare against the wall
And I will fan you
If you plough, great clods of earth will be upturned
At such a time women take the pej
In two pots to their husbands in the fields
And the mad husband gulps it down
Yet he is thinner than before
O friend, their ribs show through the skin
And the skin is loose
Yet they eat everything you give them.

Kartik brings Diwali
 And we have two lamps for it
 We touch the lantern's feet
 O Lakshmi, stay with us always
 And may our husbands live for ever.

Aghan and Pus come now; rain drizzles down
 When the rain falls on the pitcher
 It looks as if it were trembling
 In these months the beds also tremble
 And the bed with no husband—
 How her liver burns!

Magh is the religious month
 These five Sundays we keep fasting
 When the night of Siva comes
 All men are happy,

In Phagun colour sprouts everywhere
 And great bazaars
 But in all these there is no joy
 Without a husband.

About the pihu bird many tender and romantic legends have gathered. It is sometimes called the bird of sin, because the female once put ashes instead of flowers on her husband's head as he was setting out on a journey. A Baiga version of the story is that the pihu's husband was taken by the police to the jail and died there, and she now watches for him day and night in vain, for ever crying '*More pihu, more pihu, my love, my love*'. The Pardhan say that the pihu was once a Lamsena boy and his parents-in-law sent him to get worms from a field of linseed. He could not bring the correct amount by evening, and so they put him in jail and there he cries '*Pihu pihu*' as he remembers his wife.

Of the relations between the male and the female birds, it is said that the male only comes to his wife in Asadh and can only drink rain-water. For the rest of the year the female bird is lonely and sings her song in tears. In Chait and Baisakh she cries '*More pihu*' and in Jeth she says '*Mai piāsi hu, I am thirsty*'. Then with the coming of the rains, comes the male bird, and their happiness is fulfilled.

The following song describes the feeling of the female bird deserted by her husband, and by implication the emotions of all women enduring similar frustrations.

76

O my love is on his way to the Honey City
He is flying to the Honey City.

Asadh has come covering the four quarters with clouds
The lightning flashes in the clouds
The rains have filled the lakes and turned
The country into Brindaban
How happily
We drink together the rainy water.

Sawan has come, and O my friend
He is offended with me
For my enemy, my co-wife
Has roused his love for her.

Terrible are the nights of Bhadon, my friend
No sleep comes to the eyes
Come, my god, come if you desire me
But do not trick me with false promises.

He promised he would come
In the nights of the spotless moon
But the moon's light
Only tortures me like fire
Were I a Jogi
I would go from forest to forest
My body smeared with ashes
For my lord has gone to the Honey City.

Kartik comes and the girls
Will burn lights in their courts
But while he is away my body burns
As if all the lamps were in it.

Aghan brings bad news from my bird
For now I know my enemy's love delays him
While I sit pining for him.

Pus is very cold
There is no sleep for my two eyes
I sit with rosary round my neck
And say Ram Ram with all my strength.

Magh brings the spring
But how can I put on my ornaments

If he is not in the house?
 Friend, my peace and joy is taken
 By my enemy—may she be burnt!
 In Phagun they all play with coloured water
 But on whose body should I throw my coloured water?
 Chait is full of tesu flowers
 And greedy for them come the bees
 But my body is burning like a forest fire.
 O Baisakh come and with your heat
 Bring out my sweat and quench
 The burning of my body.
 In Jeth I send my message
 My pihu, my pihu,
 I am thirsty, I am thirsty.

77

O THE month of Sawan
 The rain falls *rimik jhimik*
 The month of Sawan O
Rimik jhimik falls the rain
 The court is full of mud
 How hard it was to sow the maize
 The mustard's not yet ready
 O the month of Sawan
 I've tied the bullocks with a rope
 With cord I've tied the buffaloes
 When I get home
 There'll be no food prepared
 O the month of Sawan
 Cook pulse, cook rice, cook vegetables
 O stranger girl, be pleased with me
 In the month of Sawan.

78

WHEN does it rain?
 When do the floods come down?
 When do the rocks break among the hills?
 The rains start in Jeth
 The floods come down in Asadh
 In Sawan the rocks break among the hills.

DADARIA SONGS

DADARIA SONGS

THE Dadaria, or Salho as they are called in Chhattisgarh, are the true *ban-bhajan* or forest-songs. They are sung by the people at work in field or forest, by groups of girls on their way to a bazaar, by travellers resting by the fire at night. Young lovers sing them to each other, and many a proposal has been made and elopement arranged in verse. At weddings, the two parties sing them against one another competitively; while they are singing boys and girls throw rings to each other and exchange gifts of tobacco and betel. The Dadaria can also be used as taunt-songs; at one time a notorious criminal, in whose activities we had ventured to interfere, never passed our house without singing at the top of his voice a selection of obscene and insulting Dadaria.

These are the most spontaneous and original of the songs. There is a great corpus or floating reserve of Dadaria verse, on which boys and girls draw according to their knowledge and their fancy. But they also often improvise, a task which is facilitated by the rather cheap and easy rhymes that are in fashion.

The music is always fresh and thrilling, with a lilt, a joy, an excitement that never stales. The songs are sung very loudly, at a high pitch; they are the radio messages of the aboriginal. They are usually sung antiphonally; one verse of a Dadaria expects an answer.

Though the music is always lovely the words of the Dadaria songs are often cheap and facile, a fault forced upon them by their rhymed couplet form and extempore improvised character. The singers are more interested in getting a rhyme at the end of the line than in what they say: that is why the second line of a Dadaria often has so little connexion with the first. This is not always so, of course: there are Dadaria—some of them are in this collection—which have the grace and logic of true poems; but it must be remembered that the songs given here are only a tiny percentage of the great volume of Dadaria verse which is constantly being created and revised.

Certain stages in these rhyming improvisations can be

traced. There are first the rhymed and punning songs of children.

Dani climbed the *chhāni* (roof)
 There he called for *pāni* (water)
 He was laughed at by Kanhi
 And she took away his *bāni* (voice).

Or again, 'When Gitti got a *chitti* (letter), the Ahira took it into the *gahira* (deep water).' 'Hagri set a trap for Kabri in a *dabri* (ditch)' 'Bhatrī lost his *gatri* (bundle), so Hadka took a *dudka* (gourd) and sought it in the road.'

There are other sayings and Nursery Rhymes, often very coarse, which teach children from an early age the use of 'internal rhyme' and the technique of sound within the line which is used to such great advantage in the Karma songs. If one of a party of children breaks wind, the others play a sort of *Ena deena dīna do*.

Adi pādi kinhi pādi
Rāmāji ki ghodī pādi
Tai tui phus.

Someone's farted, who has farted?
 Ramaji's mare has farted
Tai tui phus.

Sometimes, a boy says to a group of friends :

Mut mutāsi nahi mutāsi tor bahin chodāsi.
 Go and piss, if you don't piss, you'll lie with your sister.

Children sing very quickly and loudly such almost meaningless songs as,

Kukri ke lichpich
Mangan ke chhāta
Hagai gironda lila Raja.

As the children grow older, they improvise couplets of a more serious character.

Hey mor kaleja
Kaha hai mor māya?

O my liver
 Where is my love?

Hai mor hira
Tola dehu pira.

O my diamond
 I am going to hurt you.

Hai re mor phohi
Karela debe ka hohi?

O my peacock-float
 If you let me do it,
 What does it matter?

The rhymes need not be exact and sometimes the effect is obtained by the repetition of a word.

Tola pāto
To leto kora.

If I get you,
 In my lap I'll seat you.

Tathiya ki bāsi
Tathiya jurai
Bina dekhe tola
Ankhi jhurai.

The stale food in the pot
 Cools in the pot
 Without seeing you
 My eyes dry up.

From this it is an easy step to the Dadaria improvisations; both the rhymed catches and the Dadaria are used for the same purpose of love-making. They are often in fact what Arthur Waley has called 'love-epigrams', referring to the slight, one-topic poems of the Wu district in China, comparable to the *coplas* of Spain.¹ The Dadaria appear to be not unlike the Sheli sung by the Angami Naga in the jungle. The Sheli also are short two-line songs and may be sung antiphonally.²

When we go into the jungle hide no word.
 To speak all that is in the heart and be friends, is well.

¹ Arthur Waley, *One Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems* (London, 1928), 14.

² J. H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas* (London, 1921), 286.

We have never been into the forest together
I have never plucked wild herbs to fill my love's basket.
For this I am sad.

There are two main types of Dadaria—the Jorphi and the Thadi. In the Jorphi type, the first 'line' has little real connexion with the second; it is a refrain referring generally to some homely familiar object of the countryside—the creeper climbing up the wall of the house, the mango tree silhouetted against the sky, the gruel cooking in the pot. The Jorphi Dadaria is usually sung competitively; a party of boys begin and while they are singing, a party of girls discuss and prepare the reply. They continue using the Jorphi line, each side composing additional lines to rhyme with it until they are tired, and then they change the rhyme and the tune. The second line often ends with the word *dos*, 'friend', a technical device which is useful for concealing any deficiency in the rhyme.

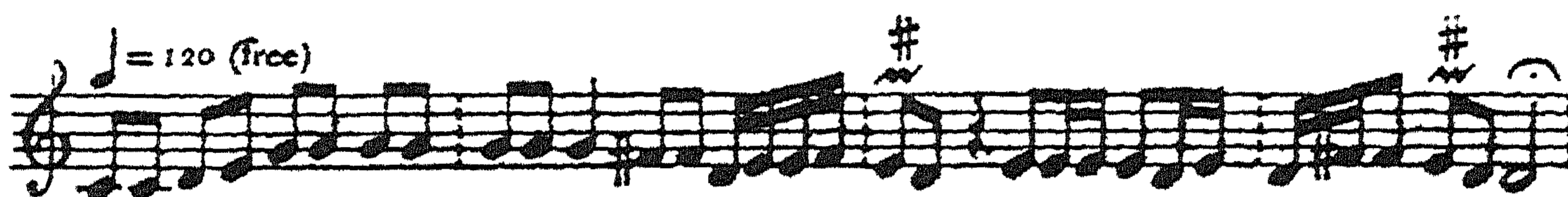
The Thadi Dadaria is a complete short poem; it may be sung *piārke jhulania*, sentimentally and swinging to and fro, or *jhulania*, rather slowly with a dragged-out tune, in contrast to the simple *thadi*, which is sharper and more concise in its music. This type of Dadaria can also be sung antiphonally, but not necessarily so; it can be shouted as a whole-hearted, delighted means of self-expression, even if there is no one to hear or answer.

There is a wide variety of tunes, and over a dozen were recorded by Walter Kaufmann.

CHALTI BHADAUNI DADARIA

Sung at a marriage while the singers are going somewhere.

79



Nawāre talwa bahut gahira
Mala bhagan bhala daile
Pāchu kar jāhira.

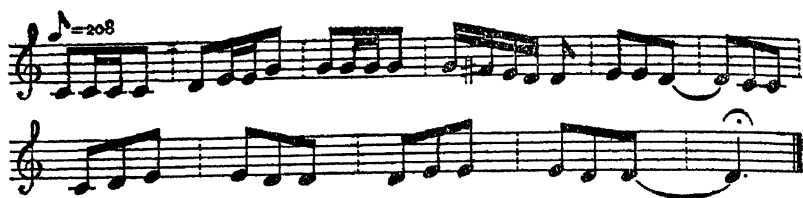
Naware pairi lagāwai reti
Tan rahāy ki jāwai tumhār seti.

THE new tank is very deep
Let me first run away
Then tell everyone.

To smooth a new anklet you need a file
For your sake my body may stay or go.

THADI DADARIA

80



*Umaria dumaria dumar phul ki darwājāle,
Darwājāle bolai jhokai sitārām bangulaīyāle.
Nahi āway. Mand piya rāja māndi lagāke :
Dola sajāke jāthay barāth.
Lāde baila nandiyāla nahi nake.*

FLOWER of the fig peeps out from the cover of the leaves
So does this girl stand in her house and accepts
his greeting Sitaram
He will not come. For my King is drinking, seated
among his friends
But the litter is ready decorated to go for the
marriage
And the loaded bullock cannot cross the river.

81



*Nahi āway. . .
Pāne lagāy pansariya re hāy
Lawange lagāy jara mahakat āwai.*

*Aso ke amlī pharela chapti
Pāne lagāy pansariya re hāy
Tor mukhpar daya bhitar kapti.*

He will not come . . .
O leaf-maker, when you prepare the pān

Put in a little cinnamon
So he will come with scented mouth.

This year's tamarind is spoilt
There is pity in your face
But you are false within.

82



Amāke dārā nawāke bhanja dāre Rām
Mor pātarela māyāke māre rowāy dāre.

Jarwāla kātai chhadike chhadi
Mor bātala batāy de kadike kadi.

ONE bends the mango branch
And breaks it in the end
Now has my love for this slim-bodied girl
Brought me to tears.

One cuts long straight branches
From the thorn-bush
Now quick and straight
Make answer to my song.

83



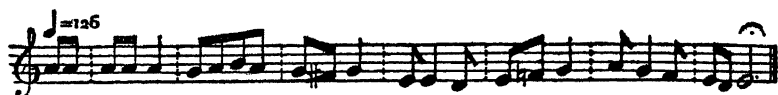
Pātar munga pātar dangni
Pātar hawai sarir
De daibe māngani.

Jaisema debe jaisema lehu
Māngani ma nahi debe paisāma lehu,

SLENDER is the munga tree
 Slender are its branches
 Slender is your body
 O give it me desirous.

However you give it me
 I will take your body
 If not for my desiring
 Then give it at my purchase.

84



Ek ped āma alag pake dār
Pāni budgay ye chhokri bachai re dos
Āy āy māro tāko ga
Pāni budgay ye chhokri bachai re dos.

THE solitary mango tree
 Cannot preserve its fruit
 Nor can anyone save this young girl from me
 No, not even if she tries to kill herself in water
 No one can save her from me.

85



Hāy hāy mor gelha patarela nāngar phāndai
Bhai talwa tipan khale pār hai hamāre pāle ga
Kātela dori ā jābe dawwa hamāre jori.

O MY friend, my slim-bodied love
 Is ploughing his field
 Beside the lake where our camp is
 O love, come to cut the creeper
 Come, little brother, my yoke-fellow.



*Āmāla tode khāunch kahike
Mola dagāma ye chhokri bulāwai re dos.*

*Kon ban āma phir kon ban jān
Ye bhawara nikal gai re dos?*

There is a separation of lovers, and both regret it. The youth speaks :

She called me saying
If you go picking mangoes
I will come to eat them
But it was all deceit, my friend.

His girl also speaks :

Where is the forest where the mango grows?
Where is the forest of jamun?
And where has my bumble-bee flown away, my friend?



* The A is sung sometimes clear sometimes a quarter-tone lower

*Nāna bailu bhala ge kāri ketahar tari ke pach had ko lai gay goy.
Ya apan dāi ke beta janam jori mor bairi goy khadapai doli.*

Meaning—unintelligible.

HARAUNI THADI DADARIA

88



*Darāpatera ke ghar chhaye re
Jaunela tai to khoje jaunela pāye re
Jaunela re dos.*

*Gorike anganāma pācha peda lim
Gori jāthāy to patauni ganat raheb din
Gori jathai re dos.*

The good-wife taunts her husband who has fallen in love
with a fair neighbour.

You thatched the roof with leaf and branch
What you searched for, that you found
O that you found, my friend.

There are five lemon trees
In that fair beauty's garden
But that fair one is going away
Amuse yourself in counting up the days
Till she return—that fair one's going away.

JHULANIA JHORPI DADARIA

89



Nahi āwai. . .
Chan chan channāke dār
Chhote supāri pān
Āma ghawud lorai hāy re.
Khayela dudh pargai
Paray ke dudk ma.

A girl is leaving home, and is sorry for it. *Channa* pulse is held to be beautiful as pearls.

O the *channa* pulse
 O the little *supāri* and *pān*
 With its own fruit the mango bends.
 Every day I had (my mother's) milk
 But I listened to others
 And came into sorrow.

90



Gāle gāle . . .
Bās ke to lāthi tor chāndike gathān dos dārike.
Milauna to āmāke āthān
Tor bolī sadakale sunāwai re dos.

Your stick is made of bamboo
 And it has silver bands
 The meeting of friends is (sweet as) mango pickle
 I hear your voice in the street, O friend.

PIARKE JHULANIA JHORPI DADARIA

91



*Bhāt ke khawaiya bāsila nahi khāy
Saikal ke to chadhaiya mor karela paidal nahi jay re dos.
Gaye bajār leyela lota
Ghar baitho khela le āpan beta.*

A girl and boy taunt one another. In the first verse she declares that she can do better than him. In the second, he replies accusing her of bringing home a bastard from the bazaar.

He who has eaten rice does not care for stale *bāsi*
The cyclist does not care to walk on foot, O friend!

You went to the bazaar and brought home a pot
So sit in your house and play with the baby.

92

WITHOUT a sarai tree near by
The saja withers
Without your sweet singing
My love dries up
My bird.

The forest poets call the saja tree the husband of the sarai, for they often are found together and to the lay eye are not readily distinguished. The trunk and leaves of the sarai are smooth and fine, those of the saja are rough and hard. Saja wood dries more quickly than sarai after it is cut.

93

You have washed the *kājal* from your eyes
You have lost, O bird
The hours of dalliance.

Nandlāli, the time of care-free dalliance and sport, must be exchanged for the burdens of life in a husband's house. *Kājal* is the lamp-black used to emphasize the beauty of a girl's eyes.

94

THE wind takes the mahua flowers away
And leaves the fruit behind
Sleep will take our friends at midnight
Then come come to love me.

95

WOMAN: You asked me to make *khichri*
But now we are lying together
You can only show your teeth in smiles.

MAN: You bid me lie with you, but what am I to do?
The bed is soft, soft is the pillow
O Rani, face towards me, let us lie breast to breast.

Khichri is a mixture of rice and pulse cooked together: it is sometimes used to suggest the mingling of male and female in the consummation of love and is the principal dish at the marriage feast.

96

THE sugar-cane is just a cubit high
But soon it will be taller than a man
Boy, do not be anxious
You will soon be grown and ready.

97

I WENT to fish and damned the stream
I jumped the fence and broke the bamboo
What happened to you, girl
What happened in the river?

98

I WENT to the bazaar and bought a necklace
But you can't get a pretty girl with money
What's the matter with you, boy?
You understand nothing, what's the matter with you, boy?

99

SHE is fishing
With her net she is fishing
My love, your life
Is going in that girl.

100

It is all you can do
To fill your own sacks and load them
How can you look after me?
All you can do
Is to make your own body smart.

101

YOUR throat looks bare without its beads
My bed is lonely without my girl.

102

THERE is grain in my house, there is grinding to do
But to satisfy my eyes I have come to look at you.

103

SING, sing, O girl, as you swing to and fro
O your arrow of stone! That bordered dhoti becomes
you, O friend.

104

HE bent the mango branch and twisted it
I have wept for desire of my slender-waisted love.

105

WASH your feet in a metal pot
The good man does good and the rascal breaks hearts.

106

IN a big house there is a little door
The Raja comes to visit it on any excuse.

107

THE black bird talks at midnight
She must speak, what else can she do?
For her heart is longing for him.

108

HER cloth is down to her knees; her hair falls to her waist
Wait my Raja wait for me. I'll go with you.

109

ONLY with a rope can you draw water from a well
I told you 'Don't don't'. But now I am pregnant.

110

THE silver ring is worthless if it is turned to copper
Another man's wife is useless to you.

111

IN the Urai jungle the rain comes down in torrents
If you would enjoy yourself it must be before you're married.

112

WHEN times are hard you have to sell your ear-rings
Don't get angry girl with me, for now it is my turn.

113

O REAPER, you are letting the sheaves fall to the ground
How I desire that slender waist of yours.

114

TELL me now once for all, open your heart to me
Is there some other man whom you desire?

115

SHE is throwing out the water and catching little fish
Keep a watch on your cattle, they are scattering everywhere.

116

I THREW twelve stones at you
Come out on some excuse with a pot in your hand.

117

THE ring I gave you
The *phundara* you gave to me
When we look at them
They remind us of each other.

The *phundara* is an ornament for tying the hair : it consists of balls of red, green and blue wool held together by coloured cords.

118

THEY threw away the silver ring
What can our parents do if our minds are made up?

119

WHAT is yours is mine and what is mine is yours
You pay with your sweat, I pay with my blood.

120

THE gun is crooked, the bullets are soft
Though others think you mad, how sweet are your words to me.

121

ONLY on a soft stone can you clean your feet
Friends of my mother's village, how I long for you !

122

SHE was but a cubit tall
Today the sugar-cane is high as a man
With his hands above his head
She was my friend from childhood
And I have made her wise in love.

123

YOU never made a garland of wild berries
Once love has gone how unhappy you are.

124

IF your mind is sad it is as joyless
As a flute that has lost its wax.

125

YOU cannot catch prawns without a fine net
You cannot win a girl without a go-between.

126

BOY there is no rain and there'll be no rice
Come let's go to work in the mine.

This Dadaria comes from Balaghat District where many of the aboriginals are now working in the manganese mines.

127

IN a field of wheat you can scarce see a single flower
The curse of a girl's sorrow is always on the head of a boy.

128

THE garden fence is very thick
Don't be afraid; I'll bring your turban hidden in my pot.

The meaning of this Dadaria is that a youth has been visiting his girl and has left his turban behind in the house. He is very much alarmed lest it will be found and thus betray his presence there but the girl assures him that she will hide it in her water-pot and take it down to him at the well or on the roadside.

129

THE lovely girl is pounding rice with a pestle
She is his own wife now
What further need has he to shoot his arrows of allurements?

This is a rather cynical comment on married life. A youth has married a most beautiful girl. In the old days

he made love-charms for her; he played the flute near her house; he took every means to win her. But now she belongs to him and there is no need for him to bother any longer.

130

A YOUNG mare won't let herself be saddled
Your jealous husband won't let you smile at me.

131

THE long-nosed rat wanders all over the new house
You wander everywhere after me.

132

IF you go into the river, it whirls you round
I saw her in my dream, but I woke and the bed was empty.

133

WHEN you put golden oil on your body
I am filled with love. Come along with me.

134

THE roof is broad and steeply slopes
With thirsty lips I begged for a drop of water.

135

LOOKING, looking, my eyes broke open
I could not say a word and she has gone away.

136

EXCEPT to your house, where should I go?
But let your tongue move a little or I'll go away.

137

How close is the bamboo to its parts
If you can't talk to me, what can we be to one another?

138

THE message of your Dadaria has sunk into my mind
My bird, I have become a Bairagi and gone into the jungle.

139

It is evening and the black-breasted quail has flown away
Let us go now, my hunter, for it is very late.

140

THE houses are burnt, the place is deserted
What shall I say when he sees the sari you gave me?
The houses are burnt, the place is deserted
Tell him your brother gave you the bordered sari.

141

WITH his stick he can bring down bel fruit from the
tree, my Gajabel
Who can give oil for your marigold-beautiful hair?

142

THE bullock wears a bell, the buffalo a clapper
Do not be angry, I am still a raw girl.

143

PIGEONS are feeding on the hillside
Don't smile at me, you are only a baby.

144

THEY are eating mangoes; the one within is restless
You must keep up love by oiling your beautiful hair.

The villagers interpret this song as meaning that a pregnant girl is standing near a mango tree, but none of her former admirers now engaged in eating the mangoes bother to offer her any. She is filled with a *dohada*, or longing for the fruit, which she interprets as meaning that the child within her womb desires it. The moral is that a girl must not neglect her beauty if she wishes to be admired.

145

A DRIED-UP lemon gives no juice
My husband says not a word and my mind is withering.

146

My ears are embarrassed by these golden rings
And if my bridegroom is impotent what use are they?

147

How clean the house is; it looks like the sky
But it brings nothing but bitterness to me.

These three songs are complaints by a young wife about her impotent husband. A fine house and golden ornaments are worthless if the dried-up lemon has no juice.

148

Boy

Your bangles press you till they hurt
And your quick movements bind a boy to you.

GIRL

I walked along with swinging arms
And knew not what you meant
But now how sad I feel.

149

Boy

THEY are breaking stones
For the new high-way
How shall I send my message?

GIRL

How hard it is to walk
On the pointed stones
Send my present secretly.

150

PUT down your bundle on the ground
Traveller, take me in your lap
Take me with you on your journey
For I love my traveller.

151

THERE is white water on the hill
How suddenly
As I was drawing water
He made me his bed.

152

As the anklets jingle *jhankār*
Follow their music
And come to me.

153

My stick is caught in the mango tree
And all the branches shake
But of the stick there is no sign.

154

THE swing is swinging
And there sits my Gajabel
Take me in your swing
And let me ride with you.

As the creeper goes round and round a tree so does the
Gajabel twine herself round the heart of her lover.

155

ON the bamboo stick is an iron point
Friendship is like mango pickle
Your words, friend, are like an arrow
That strikes my heart and there remains.

The symbols of the bamboo stick with its iron point and the mango pickle represent the mixture and combination of things as two friends are mingled and combined together in their friendship.

156

ONE wire two wires
One music from the two
In her lap are a goose and a dove
She loves them equally.

This is one of the rare songs about twins. The wires are those of a sacred *bāna* fiddle which blend together to make a melody. By these aboriginals twins are not usually regarded as unlucky.

157

Khar khar ripples the river
And its sixteen streams
Make the haldi climb
On the golden girl.

The word we have translated golden is *kanch-kuwāri*, pure and virgin as gold.

158

GIRL

You have embraced me but why did you shake me?
Why did you wake me out of my sleep?

BOY

I am but a *pihu*-bird
And I am bending low above you.

LOVE SONGS

LOVE SONGS

THE symbolism of the songs, which is in some ways their most obvious and important character, is simply the symbolism of every day set to music. The Gond and Pardhan actually do think and talk in symbols all their lives. A symbol is the readiest cure for embarrassment, and can smooth over a business transaction or a hitch in one's love-making with equal facility. So when the emissaries go on the delicate business of arranging a girl's betrothal, they do not state their purpose directly, but say they have come for merchandise, or to quench their thirst with water, or seek a gourd in which to put their seed.

Similarly, the whole intricate absorbing business of daily love is carried on with symbols. Women by the well ask each other, 'Did you have your supper last night?' 'Are you weary from yesterday's rice-husking?' Men speak of digging up their fields, getting water from the well, entering a house. Not only the solicitations of the seducer but the domestic arrangements of wife and husband cannot be decently conducted without a verbal stratagem.

A good deal of the symbolism is obvious enough, and we get further evidence for its interpretation from dreams, omens and riddles. These interpretations, however, are by no means straightforward. For example, someone dreams of a mango and the next day his wife gives birth to a male child: henceforth in that village a mango will stand as the symbol of a boy.

Other symbols are connected with folk-tales and local traditions. Some, which might be expected to depend on obvious sexual associations, actually refer to quite different matters. A girl is symbolised by a bird because she is *panchi*, winged, apt to fly away and desert her lover. She is *channa-dāl*, gram pulse, which divides in two and reveals the beauty inside. Woman is a cow, not for the obvious reasons, but because women like cows wander scattered across the countryside. When a woman goes to meet a lover, she goes like a cow by devious and secret routes and is never caught; but a man goes directly, like a buffalo, and is soon discovered. It is woman, not man, who appears as a snake in the songs. The

conventional phallic meaning is lost beneath an accumulation of legends about the snake-damsel and the poison-maid.

But, of course, a large number of the symbols are just what we would expect and may be paralleled in Western and Chinese poetry as well as in the songs of other Indian tribes.

In Chinese poetry, says Arthur Waley, images are used directly. There is no 'as if' or 'like', but the comparison is 'stated on the same footing as the facts narrated.'¹

The method of this Chinese poem—

On the hill grows the cherry tree
And lovely are its flowers;
I have seen my lord,
And splendid is his dress.²

—can be paralleled by many in this collection. But the rule here is not absolute: comparisons are sometimes emphasised by introductory phrases.

159

BREAD on the pan and rice in the pot
Are quickly ready
And quickly burnt
The boy goes to the river
With quick expectant steps.
The girl has combed her hair
And fixed her *bindia*
She goes to the river to see her love
She must go very quickly
Or his love will burn away.

The *bindia* is a very attractive silver band worn across the front of the head and generally attached to the large shields, the *dhar*, put in the ears.

160

COME, boys, and let us play
Life is only for two days
Take whichever girl you like
Life is only for two days

¹ A. Waley, *The Book of Songs* (London, 1937), 13.

² *Ibid.*, 16.

Her hips sway like a young bamboo
 Life is only for two days
 His body wriggles like a rice-stalk
 Life is only for two days.

A girl is often compared to a bamboo, a use which is also found among the Uraon¹.

On the high hills the bamboos grow
 From a bamboo the blue bow is made
 The shooting arrows are a spray of water
 The gun is fired many rounds.

A girl is a bamboo, say the Pardhan, 'because her waist is slender and sways like one.'

In a Santal folk-tale a bamboo grows out of the grave of a girl who has been murdered, and from it a Jogi makes a flute of great sweetness. Bamboos are often used in the construction of marriage-booths and small bamboo lids are placed below the bride and bridegroom when they sit for the ceremonial greeting of their relatives.

The Gond and Baiga indeed personify the bamboo as a girl, as Basmoti Kaniya or Bas Kaniya. Basmoti Kaniya fed the little Nanga Baiga with her milk and gave him a golden axe. According to one story Nanga Baiga and Nanga Baigin were born under a clump of bamboos. It was from the shavings of a bamboo that mankind were born. A curious tale about the origin of seed allots to the bamboo an obvious sexual function. Nanga Baiga was taking seed to the forest and on the way met Basmoti Kaniya the bamboo and asked her to keep the seed with her for the night. She put all the seed in her belly, and in the morning Nanga Baiga cut the bamboo and, leaving the head and feet behind, carried the belly full of seeds to his clearing. Another version is that Basmoti turned herself into a bamboo for shame when her own father gave her his seed.

An unusual application of the bamboo imagery is found in a Lao poem²—

If the arms and the legs of the lover
 Hollow about my tender flesh
 Such furrows as a liana leaves upon
 The tree she loves,

¹ Archer, op. cit., 108.

² Translated by E. Powys Mathers.

Surely the points of my breasts
 On the breast of my lover
 Shall be as sharpened bamboo branches
 Piercing an elephant.

161

O GIRL, you torment me, you are so deceiving
 And you stand there beautiful as the moon
 Yet as a deer is snared and killed
 So will I snare you, for I have caught a thousand so.

162

HE saw ripe lemons on her tree
 How could he control his hunger?
 He gave her *khir* for them
 With *khir* he filled her belly.

'Lemons' is a simile for the breast, not a very common one, for lemons are not common in the Maikal Hills. The last two lines of the song refer to intercourse and a resulting pregnancy. *Khir* is a sweet made of rice, milk and sugar.

163

BRING ash, bring chaff
 Come to clean your bangles
 See how they shine
 When I have cleaned them
 Put them on your shining arms
 When I have cleaned them.

164

THEY are cutting the bewar, they cut down all the jungle
 I can hear them shouting, they are cutting all the jungle
 O girl, your husband is away in the bewar
 Roast some mahua and take it to your husband
 You are my *lālbhāji* and I your *jāmundāra*.

Bewar is the word used for the axe-cultivation of the Baiga: it is also used, as here, for the clearings of axe and fire in the forest. *Lālbhāji* and *jāmundāra* are the names of ceremonial friendships. To call one's beloved 'red spinach' or a

'koilar flower' (used as a vegetable) or 'kader fruit' is considered entirely appropriate by the Gond and Pardhan, for 'love is eating.' A girl says, 'How I wish I could eat him!' 'When a girl has a man she eats him, for he goes into her stomach.' It is notable that such terms of endearment as, for example, Chaucer uses for 'sweet Alisoun', are also connected with the imagery of eating—'honey-comb', 'fair bird', 'sweet cinnamon'.

165

THE dark shadows of the mango grove
 What did you say to me
 In the mango shadows?
 Take me away, my love
 And make me partner of your life.

The mango is one of the 'royal trees' of India, sharing this honourable distinction with the pipal (*ficus religiosa*), the bar (*ficus indica*) and the siras (*acacia speciosa*).¹ In Indian folklore the child-giving mango is a common theme, and occurs several times in *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal* where all references are given. Crooke records a legend that the first mangoes grew in the garden of Ravana in Lanka and Hanuman was so delighted with the flavour of them that he threw some of the seeds into the sea and they floated across the channel and took root in Indian soil.

In the Maikal Hills the mango season is a time of excitement and delight. Parties of young men and girls go out into the forest and spend days enjoying the most delightful of picnics, eating little except the fresh wild mangoes and drinking the water of the mountain streams. Mango leaves strung on a cord are tied round the marriage-booth: the leaves are also used for sprinkling holy water and sometimes for applying haldi to bride and bridegroom. Many tribes still celebrate ceremonially the first eating of the mangoes, and it is greatly to be hoped that these beautiful trees will remain free and open to the people for ever and not be farmed out to strangers in order to produce revenue for Government.

¹ Penzer, *The Ocean of Story*, ii, 118.

166

As you climb the hill
 Even your lover's voice you cannot hear
 You are panting so loudly
 Some are breaking small branches
 Some are plucking leaves
 As you climb the hill.

This Baiga Karma is one of those by which lovers send their messages to each other. By a certain emphasis or intonation it is possible to suggest a meeting place—where small branches are to be broken or the place where one usually picks leaves. The images of climbing the hill and panting are, of course, sexual.

167

My fruit, my food
 How good that you have come
 In my hand I have hidden
 Some coconut for you
 If you were mine
 I would always play with you
 But how can I spend all my youth
 In the play of love with you.

The expression that we have translated 'my fruit, my food', is in the original *morē kundru-karela*. The kundru is a jungle fruit and the karela a bitter-tasting vegetable which is very popular. The phrase kundru-karela is often used as a term of affection. Terms of endearment current between Gond and Pardhan lovers are many and varied. For men there are such words as Raja, king; Baihya, madman; Sathi, companion or friend; Piara, darling; Chaila and Rassia, flirt. For women there are—Kaleja, liver or heart; Pran, life; Prit and Piari, love or darling; Maya, beloved; Chiraiya, bird; Parewa, dove; Koel; Sua, parrot; Balam, playmate; Prem ki Chiraiya, love-bird; Popsa, lung; Gondaphul, marigold; Mere Kaleja ke Kutka, bit of my liver; Amabel; Kelapan, plantain-leaf; Rani, queen; Phohi, the peacock-feather float used in fishing, hence something attractive, enchanteress; Hira, diamond. Some of these can, of course, be used indifferently for both sexes.

If such terms appear extravagant, we may remember such expressions in Elizabethan England as 'Piggesnie'—pig's eye, or 'My mouse, my nobs, and coney sweet' and many others.

168

You have brought pearly beads
And tied them in your hair
But now stop dancing in my eyes
Or I will tie you round my neck.

The Gond often speak of a beloved girl, or even part of her body, as 'dancing in their eyes'. A girl may be so beautiful that 'she drags the eyes out of your head'.

169

LITTLE girl, you talk a lot
I'll take and throw you on the ground
Clasping you in my arms
And who is going to know about it?

170

GIVE me the flower-stool, girl
I am but a stranger
All the house is yours.

DESCRIPTIONS

171

How tightly
Your new jacket
Fits your lovely body.

172

You are going to a far distant land
Give me the cloth that hides your breast
Morning and evening
I will take it out and look at it.

173

THEN it was noon
Now star-time
Where are you going
A basket on your head?

174

THE Palace of the Raja glitters in the sun
Dipē dipē dika re!
Inside is silver and gold, bright as the fire
Dipē dipē dika re!

175

THE plough and yoke are in the forest
The bullock is yet in the womb of the cow
The ploughman is still unborn
But the girl who takes him food
Is standing in the field
The Mother gave no grain, no wealth
The Mother gave no child in her womb
The ploughman is still unborn
But the girl with his food
Is standing in the field.

176

BLACK, black, very black
 I'll plough my garden
 With my two black wives
 Black, black, what a wretched colour
 There's a fair brown girl
 Picking herbs on the bank of the stream.

This is a Jhumar song sung by the Lamana gypsies.

RED BEAUTY

177

HER red cloth is like the lightning
When first I saw you my life ached for you
O proud girl, what shall I do with you?
My enemy
Where did that red cloth come from?
Where did the gay-coloured jacket come from?
As soon as I saw you
My life ached for you, my enemy.

178

WHY let your heart burn?
Why not rest and sleep
Spreading your red cloth
Clasping the earth in your arms?

179

You say, 'When I've combed my hair
And put red powder in the parting'
Every day you trick me so
But tomorrow I will myself come to your house.

180

You of the red jacket
And shining armlets
Why did you enchant me
With the magic of your eyes
My mind bids me go
But my heart is sad
I stand in the midst of water
And yet I die of thirst.

The colour red frequently appears in Indian poetry of every kind. It is said that its popularity among the Hindus is due to the fact that it is the colour of blood, and that the *sendur* or vermilion powder, so often used in Hindu worship,

on the parting of a woman's hair and in marriage ceremonies, is a blood-substitute. The vermilion is part of what is known as the *Sohag*, the lucky gift which is given at the marriage of a Hindu girl in parts of India and which also includes *kunku* or red powder, and *mahawar* or red balls of cotton wool.

But the aboriginals of the Maikal Hills do not use either *sendur* or *kunku* unless they have come into contact with civilization. They are not accustomed to throw red-coloured water at Holi, nor do they use red in their marriage ceremonies. Yet there is no doubt that they, like the Hindus, are very fond of this colour, and it is said that a red sari or a red turban at once awakes desire. It is possible that among a people who have no need of a blood-substitute, since they offer actual blood in sacrifice, the affection for this colour is purely a practical one. The saris supplied by the great Cotton Mills to this part of India are generally of only two kinds, white and red. The majority of Gond and Pardhan women wear white, but when a girl is enterprising enough to buy a red sari or fortunate enough to have a lover who will give her one, she at once becomes an object of excited admiration.

LONELINESS AND LONGING

181

RAJA, my heart is mad for you
I have gone mad for you
But you have left the warm bed in my house
Where will you find such warmth outside?
You have left me all alone
You would eat roots and fruit outside
Come, my madman, let us go together to the forest.

Green is the green hill
Yellow are the bamboos
Green is the kalindar creeper
Karanda flowers are in my hair
Where in the forest will I find my Raja?
My heart burns for him
Where in the forest will I find my madman?

182

If you go to the forest
All the branches and creepers will be yours
But who could have poured the oil
On your curly hair, my bird?

A girl thinks of her lover who has not been to see her for some time. He is so handsome that every girl ('all the branches and creepers') are bound to love him. But she suspects that some special lover has poured oil (oil with a remote association with marriage and the domestic rite of cooking) on his curly hair.

183

YOUR eye-brows are like sesamum
Like the striped seed the parting of your hair
Your body is soft and lustrous as a snake
Then why, O why, my fair
Are you still without a child?

The 'striped seed' is the *ghungchi*, a black seed with a straight white stripe, a good simile for the enchanting line of a girl's hair-parting. In another song this parting is compared to a red centipede.

184

IN the midst of the river grows a pipal thick with leaves
Among the leaves monkeys are hiding
O my love when will I meet you
And hold you close amid the leaves.

185

You play the flute
Of young bamboo
How tenderly you handle
The stops with your five fingers
Putting it in your mouth
Bringing the wind out from within
How is it you cannot hear
Your loved yoke-fellow?

186

How the clouds thundered
In the dark night
Snakes and a tigress
But for love of you
I was not afraid
I would desert my own life
For love of you
I brought a silver ball
For love of you
When I put on my coat
Remembrance comes
I was not afraid
Of snakes and a tigress
In the dark.

187

IN the tobacco-patch
A hen wanders lonely
When I don't see you
My heart wanders.

188

THE pots are full of curds
But the cow-shed is empty
Dry are the udders of the buffaloes
Where is she hiding?
In my mind I wonder
I ask in my heart
Where is my beautiful love hiding?

189

LET me remain with you
For love my tears flow
The house is no more a house
The forest is no longer forest
Every hill becomes a mountain
Without you by me
Take me with you
For love my tears flow.

THE ARROWS OF DESIRE

190

His teeth are white as curds
His eyes are full of sin
His face is beautiful as a wild creeper
His eyes are full of sin
I am only a bit of cucumber
He is the ghee
To make it palatable
He is the arrow
But he has not destroyed me
His arrow has become the pillar of my house.

In a man white teeth, white clothes, a white turban are admired. Women say, 'His turban is white as a mushroom.'

191

THE deer is grazing in her garden
Someone is creeping under the tamarind
Someone is creeping under the mango
Brother get ready your bow and arrow
Which brother cries, Shoot shoot
Which brother fires the arrow?
Little brother cries, Shoot shoot
Big brother fires the arrow.

192

My bed is a bullock with a sounding bell
But when you leave me it is quiet
Ignorant ploughman, when I first bathed
You were to come in ten days' time
Instead you took a month
And yet my Raja, though you are away
From me every day
Your memory stands like a pillar.

The bed is compared to a bullock with a bell round its neck because when it is shared it is never silent. The girl singer

has arranged that when she is mature (the reference to her first bath is to the menarche) her lover will come to visit her.

193

BEAUTY itself has touched you
When I look at you
Like an arrow
A love-charm strikes my heart.

194

ACRANE will always be a crane
Once a crane pecked at a pearl
Which in its throat became a thorn
Panting with pain the bird died.

The song is interpreted as meaning that a man may marry a beautiful girl but she may yet become a thorn within him.

195

O FAITHLESS thorn
He has my heart no longer
Yet for his sake I no more see
Mother or brother or any friends
O faithless thorn.

The thorn in this Baigani Karma is a *chhindi* thorn which pricks but leaves no mark. So although the love of the singer's faithless admirer has pricked her and though the wound stings and burns, the thorn does not remain in the flesh or in her mind.

196

SHE went to pick brinjals
A black thorn pierced her
She went to pick brinjals
The black heifer pierced her
Bring a knife, bring a thorn
To remove the thorn from her
Run folks, run to remove it from her.

197

ALONG the road, the road
I came in love with you
And a thorn pierced me
But though I came in love
You do not care for me.

To be pricked by a thorn is considered a bad omen by the Uraon for 'it implies a wound which may mean a loss of blood and a corresponding loss of vitality'.¹ To the Pardhan, however, the thorn is probably simply the sharp prick of desire.

Lust has no ears; He's sharp as thorn;
And fretful, carries Hay in's horn. (Herrick)

¹ Archer, op. cit., 160.

THE LAMP

198

A LITTLE bird is flying round her head
Its wings fall over her eyes
Look! Look! and see, her lover said
But she replied, In the dark how can I see?
Where can I find a lamp
Where can I find a wick
Where can I find the oil?
I will give you a golden lamp
I will give you a silver wick
I will give you linseed oil.

199

PUT lanterns in your earthen shrine
Get a glass bottle
Make a wick of your loin-cloth
Keep the oil burning all night long.

This Karma is a taunt song made by a woman on a poor man who has asked her to his house. He is so poor that in his little mud hut he has no light and she cruelly reminds him of this.

200

HER youth cries aloud
As she walks along the path
There is vermilion in her hair
And gold rings in her ears
So she of the slender waist
Goes drunken with her youth
Her cloth is thin as fish-scales
Her jacket is of silk
But girl, your Lord is impotent
Why not run away with me?
For a lantern needs a wick
The wick cries out for oil
The eyes long for sleep
Youth seeks the play of love.

In another version,

The lamp thirsts for oil
The blind man begs for his two eyes.

201

O MOTHER, what am I to do
With my forbidden love?
The moth does not realise the lamp
Is fire and dies.

A girl loves a man 'handsome as a lamp', but he is of the same clan and so forbidden her.

202

IN Kuar we were friends
In Kartik he became the lantern of my house
O bring back my lighted lamp
Or in a flash I'll send my life away
Write, write a letter, send it to the city
But there is no news, no message
O find my lighted lamp and bring him here
Or in a flash I'll send my life away.

The lamp, which frequently occurs in these songs as a sexual symbol, is used in the same way in some of the Pahari paintings of eighteenth century Kangra and Jammu. One of the Mukarni (a sort of riddle) of the ancient Urdu poet Khusran identifies the lamp and the bridegroom.

He passed a sleepless night with me;
But he left me in the morning;
His separation breaks my heart;
Is it the bridegroom? No, friend, the lamp.

The idea is to be found in Donne in the lovely lines:

Now, as in Tullia's tomb, one lamp burned clear,
Unchanged for fifteen hundred year,
May these love-lamps we here enshrine
In warmth, light, lasting, equal the divine.

The wick, the oil, the bowl of the lamp all have their place in the symbolism. To the modern European who may never have seen a lamp of the old type, the imagery may not appeal. But it is true and appropriate in villages which use the ancient model. A girl is 'pretty as an ornamented lamp'.

THE VILLAGE WELL

203

IN a great forest
How grand is a great tree
But by the well
The slender bamboo is pretty
This orphan girl
Is pretty
Even in her step-mother's house.

204

O WATER-GIRL! with tinkling anklets
That sounded under the dark mango tree
O water-girl! your pot of bronze
Is shining in the setting sun
Your lips are dry and thirsty as my heart
O water-girl! with swaying hips
Go to bring water from the lonely well
Fear not the dark, I'll go with you
My heart is thirsty, water-girl.

205

COOL in summer's heat
Warm in winter's cold
Is the water in the well
And the body of my love.

206

IN my garden is a well
All round it hang the mangoes
How deep and cool my well is!
But you are deeper far in love
The sun beats down and you are thirsty
But you care not for my water
You know the deep love of the heart.

207

FROM Malewa Hill you are bringing water
How musical your walk is!
But wait: soon I will humble you
On Malewa Hill is the salt earth
That the deer come to lick
O garden girl, will you too be
Salt earth for many deer?
From Malewa Hill you are bringing water
How musical your walk is!

These are the reflections of a man as he watches a girl who has rejected him. *Thamkat rengna*, which we have translated 'walking musically', refers both to the rhythm of the walk and the music of the girl's ornaments which sound as she goes along.

208

O MY love, when I see your beauty
I laugh aloud for joy
You have put a pitcher on your head
You are carrying a basket on your hip
I look back to see if you will come or no
O beautiful love of mine.

209

How shapely is the pitcher on its stand
How sweet my water-girl down by the well.

It is always said that there is no place where a girl looks more beautiful than by the well. Her upright and graceful carriage is emphasized when she places a heavy pot on her head.

210

THIS is the way of love
Tie the neck of a pot with cord
Throw it down the well
And bring up water to quench your thirst
It goes down deep
It goes down deep
And brings up water.

'A flower', say the Pardhan, 'cannot live without water: nor can a girl', and 'A tree cannot grow without water, nor can love'.

211

Do not send me
To fetch water
For I fear the well
And its deep sound
Like that of a cloud.

212

As one without a bucket
Looks down into the well
And feels more thirsty still
For seeing the water
O lovely girl, your language
Is of another country
And you do not understand.

THE WINDS OF LOVE

213

THE wind sends waves across the field
The pot shakes, the pan shakes
The girl shakes as she cooks
The rice-water falls down
And the oil-pan receives it
The wind sends waves across the field
The mortar shakes, the pestle shakes
The girl shakes as she husks the rice
The rice-water falls down
And the winnowing-fan receives it.
The wind sends waves across the field.

214

LOOK at me with the strong eyes of youth
In the cold days the trees are flowering
The wind blows among the hills
Bending the tree-tops
Take my hand, come with me
For you have conquered me
With the strong eyes of youth.

Compare the Lao poem, translated by E. Powys Mathers.

When the tempest of a boy's love
Comes up about us
Suddenly
Our thoughts and our blue and orange scarves
Are whirled away together.
Who has not seen
A great wind drive the orchids
And birds together from a tree
In a coloured storm?

215

THE love of a man
 Passes like a motor car
 Passes like the wind
 Her youth sits in tears
 As the love of men
 Goes by her like the wind
 Goes by her like a motor car.

216

Jhirmit jhirmit, little brother
 The rain comes down from the king of the clouds
 In the place where the cows are resting
 Green has grown the dubi grass
Jhirmit jhirmit, little brother
 The rain comes down from the king of the clouds
 The bison are feeding on the green dubi grass.

217

How can I tell the love I have for you?
 At midnight my life burns
 Before my eyes in a dream I see my love
 In July the rain falls *rinjhim rinjhim*
 But in August it is deep and silent as a river
 So when I desire you
 Water flows from my eyes
 As a deep and silent river.

The wind and rain are widely used in the poetry of the world as emblems of the act of love. There is a charming poem by Herrick to the Western Wind.

Sweet Western Wind, whose luck it is,
 (Made rivall with the aire)
 To give Perenna's lip a kisse,
 And fan her wanton haire.

Bring me but one, Ile promise thee,
 Instead of common showers,
 Thy wings shall be embalm'd by me,
 And all beset with flowers.

Cotton's poem 'Laura Sleeping' has the same theme.

Winds, whisper gently whilst she sleeps,
 And fan her with your cooling wings;
 Whilst she her drops of beauty weeps
 From pure and yet-unrivalled springs.

Glide over beauty's field, her face,
 To kiss her lip and cheek be bold,
 But with a calm and stealing pace,
 Neither too rude, nor yet too cold.

Play in her beams, and crisp her hair,
 With such a gale as wings soft love,
 And with so sweet, so rich an air,
 As breathes from the Arabian grove.

The rain, with which the idea of wind is closely connected, was associated in the minds of the earlier poets of Europe with the descent of Jove upon Danae. Take for example the poem by Strode quoted in *Seventeenth Century Lyrics*.

I saw fair Chloris walk alone,
 Whilst feathered rain came softly down,
 And Jove descended from his tower
 To court her in a silver shower.

Fletcher also tells how,

Danae in a brazen tower
 Where no love was, loved a shower.

W. G. Archer has given some beautiful poems from Bihar which show that, because the falling rain is a poignant image of the male act, the rains are necessarily a period of sexual strain.

June is the month of parting, friend
 The sky glowers with gloom
 Leaping and reeling the god rains
 And my sweet budding breasts are wet.
 All my friends sleep with their husbands
 But my own husband is a cloud in another land.

THEY sleep together on the naked ground
 Over them the wind blows
 Over them pass the waves of the wind.

PLAY without fear
 Play, dwellers in the jungle
 Over you the sun passes like a wave
 In the forest the clitoris-bird is feeding
 The herdsman drives out his cow
 There the deer are grazing
 The herdsman's girl drives out her cow
 There the deer are grazing
 Ah fresh as new leaves of ganja
 Like a wave the sunlight bathes you.

The *titi* or clitoris-bird (probably the Red-wattled Lapwing) is the subject of several folk-tales generally on the lines of a human girl who, finding herself without adequate sexual equipment, persuades the bird to lend her its clitoris and never returns it.

The Gond and Baiga have never, of course, seen the sea but they have opportunities of watching the surface of lake or river stirred into little waves by the breeze, while the passing of the wind over a great field of corn produces waves not unlike those of the ocean. The wave with its swinging movement is a natural sexual symbol and is used frequently in the songs. This symbolism is not unknown to classical Hindu literature. In the *Katha Sarit Sagara* the dancing girl, Sundari, dances like a wave of the sea of beauty tossed up by the wind of youth.¹ A merchant's lovely daughter, Sikhara, is 'like a wave of the sea of love's insolence' and carries the hero off his feet.² Of another girl it is said that 'like a wave of the sea she was full of beauty.'³

A poem by Felltham (1661) makes an even more direct comparison.

The waving sea can with such flood
 Bathe some high palace that hath stood
 Far from the main up in the river :
 O think not then but love can do
 As much, for that's an ocean too,
 That flows not every day, but ever.

¹ Penzer, v, 7.

² Ibid, v, 199.

³ Ibid, viii, 13.

BEES AND HONEY

220

THE lotus blossoms in the lake
Its scent goes to the sky
Two bees fly down
The scent, O love, went to the sky,
And two bees flew down.

221

THE rain is pouring down
The lotus blooms on the water
There is a dark mango tree
The bees fly in and out
A girl stands beneath the tree
The rain is pouring down.

222

TALK not of love
For my heart is bursting
The black bee is hiding in my flowers
And my heart is bursting.

The bee and its honey is widely used in the poetry of the world as a symbol for the lover and his love. The English word 'honeymoon' is so familiar that probably most people use it without realizing the imagery that it suggests. The idea is frequently found in English poetry. Lodge, for example, writes :

Love guards the roses of thy lips
And flies about them like a bee ;
If I approach he forward skips,
And if I kiss he stingeth me.

In a rapturous account of Love's Triumph, Ben Jonson asks :

Have you felt the wool o' the beaver,
Or swan's down ever ?
Or have smelt o' the bud o' the brier,
Or the nard i' the fire ?
Or have tasted the bag o' the bee ?
O so white, O so soft, O so sweet is she !

John Fletcher uses the same image in trying to delight his country lasses :

You shall have crowns of roses, daisies,
Buds where the honey-maker gazes;
You shall taste the golden thighs,
Such as in wax-chamber lies.

Drayton uses the bee to create a general atmosphere of love and passion :

The bees up in honey rolled,
More than their thighs can hold,
Lapped in their liquid gold,
Their treasure us bringing.

And Hookes in his *Amanda* describes how :

Nay, and the bee, too, with his wealthy thigh,
Mistakes his hive, and to thy lips doth fly,
Willing to treasure up his honey there,
Where honey-combs so sweet and plenty are.

Herrick, in *The Captiv'd Bee*, uses the same idea of a bee that, going 'to tipple freely in a flower', mistook Julia's lips for it and got 'honey enough to fill his hive.'

In a charming anonymous poem quoted by Norman Ault in his *Seventeenth Century Lyrics*, we read :

Summer's nectar-gathering bee
On my mistress' lips did flee,
There he his honey labour left
And of sweets himself bereft;
But in her heart he fixed his sting,
Giving sweets with sorrowing.

Herrick uses this imagery often. He has,

Each Virgin, like a Spring
With Honey-suckles crowned.

There are two Cupids fighting 'about the sweet bag of a bee'; like a bee, Love first stings, then gives 'honey to salve'; the 'pretty pilfing bee' is a messenger taking a honey-bag to the mistress.

But perhaps the most daring, as it is the most wonderful, use of the bee simile occurs in Thomas Carew's *Rapture*.¹ In this great poem, it will be remembered, the poet describes the gradual approach of two lovers towards consummation, and concludes :

Then, as the empty bee that lately bore
 Into the common treasure all her store,
 Flies 'bout the painted field with nimble wing,
 Deflowering the fresh virgins of the spring—
 So will I rifle all the sweets that dwell
 In thy delicious paradise, and swell
 My bag with honey, drawn forth by the power
 Of fervent kisses from each spicy flower.
 I'll seize the rose-buds in their perfumed bed,
 The violet knots, like curious mazes spread
 O'er all the garden ; taste the ripened cherries,
 The warm, firm apple, tipped with coral berries.
 Then will I visit with a wandering kiss
 The vale of lilies and the bower of bliss ;
 And where the beauteous region doth divide
 Into two milky ways, my lip shall slide
 Down those smooth alleys, wearing as they go
 A track for lovers on the printed snow ;
 Thence climbing o'er the swelling Apennine,
 Retire into the grove of eglantine,
 Where I will all those ravished sweets distil
 Through Love's alembic, and with chymic skill
 From the mixed mass one sovereign balm derive,
 Then bring the great elixir to thy hive.

In India the theme is used in classical poetry, and there is a beautiful little song in Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*, translated by Laurence Binyon :

In the dusk, as it falls
 On the last golden hour,
 The enamoured maiden
 Takes a honeyed flower,

¹ Of course in Western poetry the bee stands for many other things. Its murmur puts Spenser and Keats to sleep—'What is more soothing than the pretty hummer?' and Milton compares a swarm of bees in spring time to the host of Satan preparing to war on heaven.

A flower the bees kiss,
Part and kiss, hovering near;
Its tendrils light as finger-tips
She twines about her ear.

Some lines attributed to Vidyakara Mīśra¹ employ this symbolism with good effect :

Lo, there are many bonds
But none like the binding of the toils of love
Even the bee, skilled as he is in cleaving timber
Lies helpless
Bound in the hollow of a lotus.

Winternitz gives a love-charm from the *Atharva Veda*. The lover should tie to his arm an amulet of licorice wood, saying, 'This plant is born of honey, with honey do we dig for thee. Of honey thou art begotten, do thou make us full of honey. At the tip of my tongue may I have honey, at my tongue's root the sweetness of honey. In my power alone shalt thou then be, thou shalt come up to my wish . . . I am sweeter than honey, fuller of sweetness than licorice. Mayest thou, without fail, long for me alone, as a bee for a branch full of honey. I have surrounded thee with a clinging sugar-cane, to remove aversion, so that thou shalt not be averse to me.'²

The Uraon appear to be fond of songs about bees and honey, where these images have the same meaning as in Europe.

You planted a munga tree, father
The munga has spread its branches
The munga is in blossom
The bees hum and fly
They come to suck the honey.³

Crooke has an interesting note on the folklore of bees. 'In the jungles the people who collect honey think that if the hives

¹ Sir G. A. Grierson, 'Some Further Notes on Kalidasa', *J.A.S.B.*, Vol. xlviii, p. 43.

² M. Winternitz, 'Witchcraft in Ancient India', *The Indian Antiquary*, xlviii, 81.

³ *The Blue Grove*, III.

are touched, except in the light half of the month, the bees will desert the place and never return. They always ask an astrologer or village sorcerer to select an auspicious time for this duty. All over the world the souls of the dead are supposed to take up their abode in bees and flies. This is the origin of the numerous superstitions connected with these insects. Thus in Switzerland bees are supposed to be the souls of the dead. In Germany the bee is believed to have survived from the lost Paradise of the Golden Age. Bees in England are informed when the master of the house dies; otherwise they would desert the place. They are believed to sing in their hives on Christmas Day. In Cornwall bees are never moved except on Good Friday. In Bedfordshire the people sing a psalm in front of a sick hive and they are sure to get well as the spirit of disease is scared by the noise of the singing. Numerous similar practices are found in England and Scotland.¹

But apart from the fact that bees are generally considered lucky, and it is supposed to be a very good omen if a swarm settles in or near a house, we do not know how far these ideas are current in India.

¹ *North Indian Notes and Queries*, v, 99.

THE SWING OF LOVE

223

O GAJABEL, take me in your swing
And let us swing together
Singing the while.

How sweet you look
With dhoti underneath
And cloth above
May I climb into your swing?
Swing me, swing me with you.

If I don't see you every moment
I am filled with longing
But how can I climb into your swing?
Swing me, swing me with you.

A girl stands by while her Gajabel, a boy-friend, swings on his swing. The Gajabel is one of the many types of friendship made by villagers in this part of India. It is usually established between members of the same sex, but may sometimes exist between a boy and a girl. The word is used aptly here, for the swinging creeper and its associations of love and friendship blend with the idea of swinging, which—as we will see—is symbolical of the sexual act.

224

SWING swing Rani Raja
Till the flowering of the rose
Swing swing Rani Raja
Till the flowering of the marigold
Swing swing Rani Raja
Till the flowering of the champa.

225

If you cannot swing to and fro
Catching my shoulders
What right have you
To be called young and a man?

You always said to me
Ride, ride, ride in my swing
But you never put me
In your own swing
Sometimes it was brother's swing
Or he was swinging someone else
But you never put me
In your own swing
Sometimes brother swings you
And with your eyes you call him friend
But you never put me
In your own swing.

Frazer has studied at great length the interesting subject of the magical use of swinging.¹ Many Gond and Baiga shrines in the Maikal Hills have in front of them tall wooden swings, the seats of which are often studded with sharp spikes. On these priests and magicians swing themselves into a state of trance when they are able to proclaim the will of the gods. In other parts of the Central Provinces the Gond practise the Meghnath swinging ceremony with the same object. The songs, however, stress the erotic character of the swing—a point which was noticed by Freud and Havelock Ellis. Havelock Ellis says, we do not know on what authority, that in the temples of some parts of Central India swings are hung up in pairs, and men and women swing in them until they are sexually excited. It is certainly true that Gond and Pardhan women love a swing and when their husbands are away often make one in their houses. The references in the songs illuminate this practice which, says Havelock Ellis, is one of the six hundred forms of sexual pleasure enumerated by De Sade.²

The sexual character of swinging is clearly illustrated in a Pardhan Swinging Song which is sung by girls as they swing to and fro.

¹ Sir J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: The Dying God*, 277-85.

² Havelock Ellis, *The Evolution of Modesty*, 174.

O the Rani swings below and the Raja swings above
What is the pillar made of and how have they made the rope?
Of silver is the pillar made and the rope is made of gold
O the Rani swings below and the Raja swings above
Swing swing, the Raja wearies. Swing swing the Rani
All my body is perspiring, swing swing the Rani
With her cloth she wipes his face, swing swing the Rani
The pillar is drooping and the strings have broken
No longer swings the Rani.

It is perhaps significant that the ancient Swing Festival of India was associated with Krishna. At first his image as a baby was rocked in a cradle, but later this was changed to the representation of the god as a young man accompanied by Radha. 'That swinging was a very popular pastime in ancient India is attested by numerous representations of the subject in the mediaeval sculptures of Orissa; Vatsyana speaks of a swing as a common piece of furniture in every house'.¹

¹ N. K. Basu, 'The Spring-Festival of India', *Man in India*, vii, 136.

FLOWERS

227

As they care for flowers
Growing in a Palace garden
Keep my love like that
Keep my love in your heart.

228

BLOSSOM is in her hair
Beautiful is it as the plantain flower
Some flowers bloom in the dawning
Some flowers bloom at the dead of night
The flower of holiness
Blooms in the morning and in the evening
At midnight blooms the flower of sin.

229

By every path and lane there is a garden
There is a garden of flowers
But give me a place in your garden, my beloved
For this love, my enemy, will not let me alone.

230

HER long hair is all scattered on the ground
I am going to pick the flowers
At sunset her hair is all scattered on the ground
And I am going to pick the flowers
At bed-time her hair is all scattered on the ground
I have picked a lovely flower.

LOVE-BIRDS

231

LET me come to the mango-grove, my love
Let your koel come
Let me come to the mango-grove.

232

Kuhu kuhu cries the koel
The swallow twitters in the sky
But the house-bird talks at midnight
And the man at cockcrow.

The koel or Indian cuckoo is a bird with a green bill and a long tail. The female is of a dark green colour with white bands and spotted. The koel is often used in Indian village poetry as the symbol of a bride or a lover. According to Vatsyayana the perfect girl, the Padmini or lotus girl, has a voice low and musical like that of the koel. In Mandla the bird is believed to be very lucky and to foreshadow the coming of a son or husband, when it cries *Uth dekh, Uth dekh*, 'Get up and look.'

Crooke records a proverb which says :

The crow calls on the left
The cuckoo calls on the left
Both are good omens.

When the Gond are discussing a problem and they wish to make the matter firm and settled, one of them says as he passes judgment 'This is my *koel boli*', or my 'cuckoo saying'.

An Uraon poem permits a boy to catapult all other birds but admonishes him on no account to kill a koel. W. G. Archer gives an Uraon poem which closely resembles one of those in this collection.

Kahul kuha, the koel calls
Sitting in the mango branches
Koel, you went away for twelve years
And in the thirteenth year you come and
gladden the grove.

In this poem the grove is the village and the koel is a girl returning home after a long stay at her husband's house. The association of the koel with the mango tree, another marriage symbol, in both poems is interesting.

It is curious that in Europe the cuckoo, at least in former times, was far from being a good omen. Shakespeare's song in *Love's Labour's Lost* will be remembered :

The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men, for thus sings he,
Cuckoo, cuckoo !
O word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear !

But later 'the lewd cuckoo' has been transformed into 'a blessed bird' and 'darling of the spring.' In a folk-song from Wiltshire recorded by Alfred Williams, it is thus described :

The cuckoo is a merry bird,
He sings as he flies,
He brings us glad tidings,
And tells us no lies.

The cuckoo comes in April,
He sings a song in May,
In June he beats upon the drum,
And then he'll fly away.

The cuckoo is said to 'beat the drum' when he often falters and cries 'Cuck-cuck-cuck,' without the final syllable. This is said to be a sign of his impending departure.

233

Jhir jhir ripples the stream
Plantains are growing on the bank
Your body is like the stalk of a plantain
Sweet as the divided mango is your body
The koel longs for a mango
And my life longs for you
I cannot hold my life in patience
Your body is like a plantain stalk
Sweet as a divided mango.

The plantain is generally regarded as lucky and auspicious in India. Hindus believe it to be the abode of Devi

and in North India the tree is worshipped on the last day of Kartik. The first fruit of the tree should be given to a Brahmin. In L. B. Day's *Folk-Tales of Bengal*, a deserted wife sweeps the earth round a plantain and the tree blesses her. In the Maikal Hills also both Gond and Baiga regard the tree as lucky and use its branches during their marriage ceremonies. In Bastar, however, owing to the fact that the leaves are placed under a corpse while it is being carried out for disposal, the tree is believed to be inauspicious.

234

THE parrot weeps without its cage
 My life weeps without support
 How empty the house is
 Without a girl
 Day by day my body decays
 There is no one to help me
 No one ahead and no one behind
 No one to give me wisdom
 How empty the house is
 Without a girl.

235

EVERY evening
 The crows sit talking
 But my Raja
 Without a word
 Left me
 Without a word
 Every evening
 The crows sit talking.

The crow is a very natural symbol of the human beings in whose company it lives so intimately. Even in a village where there is little waste and little enough to get for food, the crows gather round and lodge in any neighbouring tree. The crow is regarded in Mandla as a learned bird, probably on account of its wonderful eyesight. It is supposed to know all about the *banaspati* or magic herbs. It is unlucky, however, to see a crow sitting on the back of a pig, nor should one see a crow bathing as one is about to start on a journey. If a crow says *rao* there will be a quarrel in the house, or

bad news will come. But if it says *cao* it is lucky. It is lucky also to see two crows feeding each other.

Crooke classes the crow with the cuckoo and the jay as a news-bearer. If a crow flies a short distance and hops about on the roof or near the house, it is a sign that the master is coming or that news of him may be expected.

236

THE kussera bird is swinging
Free on the mango branch
But you stand in the court
How can I call you to me?

The meaning here seems to be that the bird on the mango branch is free to come and go as it will, but the girl standing in the court of her husband cannot come out to meet her lover.

237

LIKE a leaf he flew away
Where has my talking-bird gone?
He sits on the pillar
Wet above and wet below
But made of very fire
In his sorrow I cared for him
In mine he flies away
Where has my talking-bird gone?

238

SOUL, you are burning burning
For in the forest your bird
Is wet with her tears
Soul, were you a bird
You could fly to her
Soul, were you a bird
You could fly to her
With my message
Soul, you are burning burning.

In this poem, the soul is called *hira*, diamond. The bird is the *pihu* about which many tender legends have gathered.

THE COBRA GIRL

239

ENCHANTER, for what fault of mine
Are you beating me?
Lying on their bed the two embrace
The girl is lovely as a cobra
Why are you beating me?
You have snapped the knots of my jacket
And with my own cloth you are wiping
The moisture from my face.

240

I LOST my diamond
In the Gaurela bazaar
The girl with cobra eyes
Drew him after her
Do not bite him, girl
I will wait, I will wait
By the river.

241

O MY black darling, move the straw shutter
Don't make a sound, I'm coming secretly
Spread the mat, I'm coming secretly
I'm coming naked, O my black darling
I'm going to lie with you, O my black darling
I'll come without a sound, O my black darling
O my black darling, move the straw shutter
Don't make a sound, I'm coming secretly.

242

You are coming very slowly, why do you delay
 O my black cobra?
 I have brought you anklets, measured to your feet
 Why do you delay, O my black cobra?
 I have brought you a sari, measured to your body
 Why do you delay, O my black cobra?
 I have brought you armlets, measured to your arms
 Why do you delay, O my black cobra?
 You are coming very slowly, why do you delay
 O my black cobra?

243

WOMAN, shew your wisdom
 You have two arrows
 Of mercy and of scorn
 The black-faced and hooded snake
 Has two tongues
 You have the knowledge of a panch
 And a learned Pandit
 Woman, shew your wisdom
 Yet like a little child you pick up leaves
 And in a moment make them into a plate
 To give the hungry food.

Woman, says the Pardhan poet, is *nāri*, *nahar* and *nāngin*—wife, tiger and cobra. A woman is a snake because, 'Once she desires a man she chases him and bites him, thus making him love her'. 'To love a girl is like poison in the body'. There is a story that a Raja had a lovely daughter, so beautiful and auspicious that she was like Lakshmi herself. One day four rich men came at the same time wishing to marry her, and the father angry at their importunity made his daughter into four girls, one her original Lakshmi-like self, one a cobra, one a bitch and one a cat, and to each married one of the four suitors. So it is said that there are four kinds of women. Some are like Lakshmi, fortunate, beautiful and adored; some are bitches, some are cats and some are cobras.

The subject is a very large one and has been studied at length elsewhere. There are several stories in *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal* which are based on the motif of a snake inhabit-

ing a woman's body, and the idea goes back as far as Mandeville and legends about Alexander the Great.

The symbolism here appears to be reversed, but it is notable that Keats too has a heavily-coloured description of a woman-serpent.

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue,
Striped like a zebra, speckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson-barr'd,
And full of silver moons, that as she breath'd
Dissolv'd or brighter shone, or interwreath'd
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries,
So rainbow-sided, full of miseries,
She seem'd, at once, some penanc'd lady elf,
Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self.
Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire
Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar;
Her head was serpent, but, ah, bitter sweet!
She had a woman's mouth, with all its pearls complete.

SPORTING LIKE FISH

244

You go to the river
And try to catch fish
A lovely girl
Has slipped through my hands.

245

HE went to bale out water
From the pool and saw the fish
Your cloth is torn
And shows your breast.

246

THE ducks settle on the banks of Siuni
What great love there once was between us
But now you have wearied of me
Great fish swim in the Siuni river
Queen of my garden, let me take you to the bank.

247

You kill a fish and remove the scales
My bird, where have you lost
The lustre of your life?

Fish as a sex or fertility symbol is very old. The double fish is found on bronze bowls, bells and gongs imported from Eastern Tibet into the Brahmaputra valley. This is a Buddhist symbol, one of the eight auspicious signs. The same sign was regarded as lucky when put on the walls of huts in Orissa. In China the two principles of creation—male and female—(*yin* and *yang*) were represented by the symbol of two fishes. Double fishes also occur as a lucky sign on ancient pottery and other objects from China. The carp fish is held as a good omen for success in examinations even to this day. The kings of Madura adopted a fish or a pair of them as their family crest. In representations of the late Buddhist deity Hariti found in Bengal she has been

shown with four hands, one holding a fish, one a drinking bowl and the other two a baby. This appears to be a fertility symbol. The place of Matsya (fish) in the Tantric ritual is well known.¹ The famous archery competition for the hand of Draupadi was the attempt to pierce the eye of a metal fish hung high in the air, through a revolving disc.

The symbolism appears again in the sixteenth century Chinese novel *Chin P'ing Mei*, where Hsi Men and Gold Lotus are described as 'enjoying themselves like little fish in the water.' The idea occurs in a song written at about the same time in Elizabethan England by Gascoigne where the fish in the sea symbolize women, and the fisherman expresses the wish,

That all the seas at every tide
Were his alone to fish.

Herrick, in a marriage song, calls on Night to bring the 'brisk Bridegroom' and the 'dainty Bride' to bed,

Where being laid, all fair signs looking on,
Fish-like, increase then to a million.

Coming to modern India we find the Uraon using fish as symbols for marriageable girls.

The fish sport in the pools
The fish sport in the pools
The fish sport
The bride sits in the mother's lap
The bride sits on the father's knees
The bridegroom catches fish
The bride jumps in the corners.
Jumps, holding herself with glee, in the
corners.²

The expression 'the bridegroom catches fish' means that the marriage has been settled and a fish has been caught.

Among the Chongli, a youth proposes marriage with a girl by offering her parents a catch of fish taken by himself. The Mongsen boy does the same after the betrothal has been settled.³ The presentation of fish is the formal sign that an

¹ See T. C. Das, 'The Cultural Significance of Fish in Bengal', *Man in India*, xii, 96 ff.

² *The Blue Grove*, 119.

³ J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, 270 ff.

Ao marriage is complete.¹ Among the Palaung of Burma, fish is also part of the bridegroom's gift to his bride's parents.²

The Lhota Naga use cooked fish as one of the ingredients of an aphrodisiac.³ Crooke records that during a Lohar marriage in the United Provinces the bride holds a fish made of flour in front of the bridegroom who attempts to shoot it, and explains this as an obvious form of fertility magic. In the Central Provinces the ritualistic use of fish is more common at funerals.

¹ J. P. Mills, *The Lhota Nagas*, 168.

² *The Ao Nagas*, 237.

³ *Ibid*, 168.

LOVE AND MUSIC

248

My love is playing on a fiddle
He is hiding behind a tree
O broken and blind may be the eyes
Of any girl that looks at him.

249

THE young flute player
Pipes on the river bank
All my desire is resting in his flute
And house and court no more content me
Let them be burnt with fire
Those bamboos that make the flute.

250

HE comes from the house as lightning flickers in the sky
His hair is tied in a knot on one side
He stands shining in the court
What is he doing standing in the court?
What is the boy doing? He is shining like the lightning
He is standing on tip-toe playing on the flute
He leaps in the air as he beats on his drum
Come, let us go and listen to his flute.

251

THE drums are beating
The singers are calling
The Sunflower Queen has begun the dance
What wood shall we bring for her house?
What wood shall we bring for the beams?
What wood shall we bring for the verandah?
Gold we will bring for the pillars
Silver we will bring for the beams
Diamonds we will bring for the verandah
Where the Sunflower Queen is dancing.

The singers of the songs in this collection are some of the poorest people in the world and it is safe to say that not one of them has ever seen a precious stone. Unlike aborigines living in the neighbourhood of a palace in an Indian State, the Gond and Baiga of the remote Maikal Hills do not even have the opportunity of observing from afar the bejewelled insignia of royalty. Yet references to the diamond, the ruby and the pearl are common in their songs and folk-tales. Motilal, or the Pearl Boy, is a common name and a Pardhan hero is called Hiranman Kshattri, the Diamond Warrior. 'A woman', says a proverb, 'is a diamond because she gives you one.'

The use of these symbols is probably a literary convention that has been acquired from wandering Hindu minstrels or has come down in the traditions of the ancient Gond kingdoms. The five precious things of Hindu story are gold, diamond, sapphire, ruby and pearl.¹ The five jewels are usually given as ruby, sapphire, pearl, emerald and topas.² In the *Katha Sarit Sagara* a beautiful woman is described as having a waist like a diamond and ruby-coloured feet.³ Penzer quotes a story from Bernhard Julg about the Diamond Kingdom of Central India, though apart from the name the story has nothing to say about jewels.⁴ Such references are frequent throughout the whole range of Indian literature and have affected the poetry of other tribes beside those of the Maikal Hills. There is, for example, an Uraon song

Come and visit us, brother
With your diamond girl
In the morning, brother
With your diamond girl.⁵

The imagery is obvious and natural, as for example in Drummond's *Madrigal*.

The ivory, coral, gold,
Of breast, of lips, of hair,
So lively sleep doth show to inward sight.

What is remarkable here is its use by people to whom the objects of comparison are so unfamiliar.

¹ Penzer, ix, 23.

⁴ Ibid, iii, 68.

² Ibid, viii, 248.

⁵ *The Blue Grove*, 38.

³ Ibid, vii, 8.

252

THE drums agree together
To make a single rhythm
My love and I sit together
Like the lotus and its leaves.

253

THE drum is made of earth
But what a fine song it makes
I too am made of earth
But take me with you
Take me with your love
And from me will come a song.

254

ON the verandah they are beating the drum
In the court one plays the fiddle
In the village are the seven colours of sound
But it is only your life
That can fill my life with delight.

255

THERE are four legs to the bed
On the legs are four diamonds
On your chest are golden coins
On your feet are the musical shoes
From your lips comes the music
Of different colours.

This song is the rather unusual rhapsody of a girl about her lover. It is interesting that music is mentioned in terms of colour.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF LOVE

256

He talks and talks
His words are as ripples on the water
You know and I know
That such talkers are deceivers
They think of other's loves
And forget their own
He is like a rippling wave
That passes by.

257

How young I was
When you took me as yours
And then you spoilt my life
Mid-way in life you have deceived me
But God will take me
To the end of the road.

Pār lagāna 'to take across'. This, like the word *pardesh*, stirs the same sort of emotion as the expressions in English 'Journey's End' or 'The end of the road'.

258

I cut thorn bushes and made a garden
In my garden I sowed millet
That I might eat and live I married you
But half-way down the road you left me
Beware of a deceiver
He gets into your belly, takes away your wisdom
He says it is shallow but tricks you into deep waters
I married you that I might eat and live
But half-way down the road you left me.

259

WHAT rage has caught your life
That your bones show through your body?
Was it the lightning of the sky
Was it a hail-storm that struck you
That your bones show through your body?
Not the sky's lightning nor the hail
Struck me, but loneliness
Without my beloved
So that my bones show through my body.

260

O MY soul be patient, she is very beautiful
But this lovely treasure belongs to another
How wonderful she is! When you see her
 your mouth waters
But she is not for you. Be patient
Ah! she has come out of the house
She peeps out from the verandah
Tears fill my eyes, for she is not for me.

261

WITH sad news I am come
I am standing at your door with heavy heart
But you care not whether I weep or no
For you are with your beloved
But I stand at your door with sad news in my heart.

262

THE quail calls in the stream
On the bank of the lake it cries
Burnt is the oil-seed
Burnt is the grass of last year
In the middle of the forest the quail calls
And the Raja comes and hears the quail calling
On the bank of the lake
The house is of mud
The door of cotton-wood
Milk-sweet of the brown buffalo
Is being cooked

The Raja comes hastily
But all he hears
Is the quail calling on the bank of the lake.

The quail is greatly relished by the Gond and Baiga for food. These birds are said to be great lovers and always feed near one another. If one of them is found missing, they all cry out, come together, look at each other and then continue feeding. A common refrain in the Karma songs runs 'The quail calls on the brow of the hill'.

263

THE Bairagi's son can eat food three days old
But day and night my tears
Drink my young blood
Day and night drink my young blood.

264

NEVER fall in love with a Jogi
For any day he may go on pilgrimage
Leaving you in tears behind your house.

We have already noticed that the Jogi, Bairagi or Sadhu, who is supposed to be the very embodiment of renunciation and chastity, often appears as the symbol of a lover. At a marriage the bridegroom is abused by his mother-in-law as a Jogi with matted hair full of scorpions. The symbol is appropriate not so much because the ascetic often has a very bad reputation among the aborigines but rather because he is always wandering on from place to place and never remains attached to a fixed abode. So too the aboriginal lover changes from girl to girl and can never remain in one place. Compare No. 49.

265

I BOUGHT a ring supposing it was silver
But when I put it on I find it copper
So if I am deserted by my Patwari
Of what use can a Munshi be to me?

A Patwari is a village revenue official of great importance to the people, as it is with him that most of their dealings about land are concerned. A Munshi is any kind of clerk.

THE VAMP

266

You were sleeping beneath the mango
But your feet were under the tamarind
Your love-thief took away your bangles
And all you got was blows and kicks
It was you who called me there
I poked and poked you with my stick
But you never woke, my snuffling pet.

This is a humorous song about a girl who invited her lover to meet her in the forest. When he arrived he found her sound asleep, so he stole her bangles. When her husband discovered the loss he beat her. In the last three lines the lover, the *chhaila chor*, protests that it was not his fault. *Balaina* in the last line is someone who snuffles or has a running nose; it is a rather kindly term of abuse, often applied to children.

267

O THE zoolum of love
In this Patangarh bazaar
I am oppressed with love
She has a red-bordered sari
Her hair is tightly tied and sticks out behind
My love for my own tribe weakens
Shall I take her to the river
With a bottle
And excite her to love?
O fair-bodied girl
Your tight-fitting jacket
Your long hair tied behind
Going with uncovered head in the bazaar
You oppress me
O the zoolum of love.

Much admired is the fashion among Gond girls of tying the hair in a very big bun which sticks out at the back of

the head, and is often adorned with bright balls of coloured wool, flowers and bunches of cowries. Far worse than the exploitation and oppression of Governments and money-lenders is the harsh zoolum of love.

268

To kill a bat is easy
 With a bit of split bamboo
 Take her in a ditch and tickle her
 Stranger, as you go along
 Take her in a ditch
 Easy as a bat.

It is supposed to be easy to kill a bat with a *dangnaiya*, a strip from a bamboo which has been split into four parts. It is as easy to seduce a flirt.

269

WORK in the fields is not for me
 I am going to find a job.
 You make a hut with walls of reeds
 All day you have to husk the rice
 Yet when a visitor arrives
 How can you honour him?
Hil hil blows the rain all day
 Mosquitoes bite all **night**
 There's no food in the house
 And you must die between the empty bins
 Work in the fields is not for me
 I am going to find a job.

This grouse at the conditions of village life can also be used to convey a secret message. The man sings to a girl whom he is trying to persuade to elope with him, and describes the sort of life she will have to live if she refuses to accept the new and better job he offers her.

270

ROUND the goat's neck is a bell
 Round the buffalo's neck a clapper
 I will care for you with love

Double that I give my wife
 As dark clouds hide the moon
 So will I hide you
 I will care for you with love
 Double that I give my wife.

271

Chituk chituk go your toe-rings
Runjum runjum go your anklets
Kudur budur beats your heart
 Yet you do not turn your head
 And look at me
 What an enemy you are
 If I live one day I'll meet you
 If I die the world dies for me
 But I know your heart beat *kudur budur*
 What an enemy I am
 That you did not turn your head.

The picture here is of a girl going along the road with her husband. She meets an old lover and longs to look at him but dares not. Turning her head aside apparently absorbed in her husband she quickens her pace to a fresh jingling of her ornaments and her old lover gets some satisfaction from her embarrassment.

272

It was you who spilt the milk
 On the way, on the way
 So why are you accusing me?
 The flirt was coming on the way
 The Ahirin was going to him
 They met below the pipal tree
 And there they spilt the milk.

This song is interpreted by the villagers as meaning that a girl has been caught red-handed by her husband and she tries to turn the tables on him by accusing him of similar infidelity.

273

Ghada-roda fly the arrows
Why should I stay in Mohagarh?
Some say, Kill him, kill him
Some say, Catch him, catch him
Some say, Drive him from our country
Why should I stay in Mohagarh?

This song describes the visit to a village of a young man who has succeeded in making himself very popular with the girls and as unpopular with the men. The village is called Mohagarh or Fortress of Love but he decides to go away for fear of what the people will do to him.

274

You go to the bazaar
And for money buy potatoes
When the young men know
A girl's love for her husband is broken
They chase her as if she was a bear.

THE RIGHT TRUE END

275

O MY sinner, let us spend this night together
My mind whispers, Come, let us run away
But I am afraid of that long journey
I look at you and long to live with you for ever
But at least, my sinner, we will spend tonight together.

276

CUT a green bamboo
Pull off the bark
Get a bed ready
A bed with four legs
At midnight there is a lovely girl
Sleeping on the bed
At midnight her lover
Mounts his horse and rides away.

Compare Garcia Lorca's poem, 'The Faithless Wife'.

By the finest of roads
That night I galloped
On a mother-of-pearl filly
Without bridle or stirrups.

277

THE moon is two days old
They are all playing at home
O love, not even in my dreams
Could I find you
As I turn to and fro
On my midnight bed
I know that you have left me
And my love is scorched.

The image here is of the girl lover being turned face and about before the fire until she is scorched by its heat. The word *kalapana* which is used here refers to the baking of anything before a fire.

278

MILK in a dirty pot
Milk from the cow turns sour
So my loved enemy
I cannot sleep alone.

279

How can I go into the inner room?
My anklets sound *chunur chunur*
The wheat-bread is soft
The oil drips from it
O lover, eat, and you will be content
My anklets sound *chunur chunur*.

The picture here is of a youth who goes to visit his lover in her own house. She gives him his supper and he begs her to go with him into the inner room which with its grain-bins and darkness is a very common place for the meeting of lovers. She says that if she goes the noise of her anklets will betray her. The soft wheat-bread and the oil are obvious sexual symbols.

280

COVER me with your cloth
Alone I die
On this cold night.

281

How could I come
Without your calling me
How could I come to your bed?

282

SAD and lonely I left home
I spent four days in the forest
My life burns till midnight
As I remember you
And when at last I go to sleep
I see you in my dreams
My darling.

283

THE hot dust rises from below
The hot sun burns my breasts
Where is the shade of the mango grove?
Where is the jamun's shade?
Cover me with a cloth
That my breasts may not be burnt.

284

I HAVE come forgetting sleep
Leaving sleep behind
Leaving the sleep in my eyes
There was a bed for me
A bed that invited sleep
But as I lay there
I remembered you
And I came forgetting sleep
Leaving sleep behind.

The word for a comfortable bed, *kathri*, suggests that it has been made by spreading a great heap of old bits of cloth and other soft odds and ends. This does actually make a mattress which quickly lulls the sleeper to sleep.

285

THERE is a bed
But empty
O lovely child
Where has your laughter gone?

286

WHEN the fruit burdens the mango
The mahua flowers fall
At midnight all are sleeping
Come then when all the world is sleeping.

287

At midnight the dogs are barking
 The stars have come into the sky
 Long are the leaves of the young bamboos
 And breaking through them comes my thief
 At midnight the dogs are barking.

288

BLUE calf tethered
 With a coloured rope
 My heart dwells
 In your begging-bowl
 Stay, my madman,
 Stay a night until
 Our enemy the cock shall crow.

Katori, or begging-bowl, is a common sexual symbol. The idea of the dawn as the enemy who comes to disturb the rapture of love, is found in a Gond song:

It is growing lighter: we can see the fields
 The hour of parting has come
 My heart is full of anger against the dawn
 For in this field we must part from one another
 Now home will be no longer home to me
 The forest is no more a forest
 I will be restless in the village where I found
 rest till now
 But part we must, for our enemy the dawn
 has come.

A saying reported from the United Provinces runs:

My lord will go in the morning
 My eyes will be lost by weeping
 O God let there be no dawn to such a night.

And in an anonymous poem from *Seventeenth Century Lyrics*, the lover exclaims:

Fain would I, Chloris, whom my heart adores,
 Longer awhile between thine arms remain,
 But lo, the jealous morn her rosy doors,
 To spite me, opes and brings the day again.

289

My madman bathes in the golden tank
Gold gold the water rises
On the waves the peacock dances
My heart my heart is far away
On a journey with my friend
Like a blue colt my madman dances
Neighing *hiyo hiyo*
On the waves the peacock dances
And my madman bathes in the golden tank
Gold gold the water rises.

290

For how short a time
The blue colt
Stays with the mare
In sweet talk together
Let us spend this short life.

MARRIAGE AND ITS SONGS

THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY

THERE are a great many small variations in the marriage customs of the Maikal Hills, but the main outlines are the same for Gond and Pardhan, Baiga and Agaria as well as for the minor Hindu castes such as the Ahir, Dhulia, Panka and Dhimar. The chief distinction is to be found in the fact that the Gond, Pardhan and Agaria celebrate the main business of the marriage in the bridegroom's house, whereas both the most primitive tribes such as the Baiga (and in Bastar the Hill Maria) and the Hindu cultivators celebrate it in the bride's house. The legend that accounts for this describes how once, when a Gond bridegroom was on his way to fetch his bride, disaster befell the party and Dulha Deo in the shape of a tiger carried him off. The mediums were consulted and declared that henceforth the Gond should celebrate their marriages in the bridegroom's house, for similar dangers would not befall the bride on her way to join her future husband. Probably this is not the primitive custom, for both the most ancient and more 'advanced' communities agree in concentrating their ceremonies in the bride's home, and probably it was some actual incident as tradition suggests that induced the Gond and allied tribes to change their habits.

The Raj Gond and the other tribes in various places compromise by celebrating their marriages in both centres. Marriage-booths are erected in both the bride's and the bridegroom's houses and the procession has to go round the pole in both.

Other differences from tribe to tribe or place to place are less fundamental and are mainly concerned with picturesque additions. Thus the Baiga make an elaborate dummy elephant and the bride's brother and specially chosen visitors ride round the village on its back. A Baiga marriage differs in many minor particulars. These have been fully described in *The Baiga* and need not be repeated here. Marriages of the Baghel or Tiger sept of all tribes are remarkable for an incident when some of the bride's relatives—her father, brother or paternal uncle—are possessed by the Tiger God who is supposed to be angry at the loss of a girl from his

clan. In ecstasy they seize a goat, kill it with their teeth and drink its hot blood.

Here we are concerned with the marriage ceremonies mainly as a setting for the marriage songs. We will try to simplify the sequence of events as far as possible so that the beautiful outlines, which are themselves a poem in action, can be clearly seen. We will describe therefore the main incidents of a typical Pardhan or Gond marriage of the Dindori Tahsil.

The Business Aspect. Most true romance is rooted in economics and the aboriginal, who is essentially a realist, does not find the marriage ceremony any the less inspiring and poetic because of the sound business arrangements that are behind it. A marriage between a young man and woman depends on the ability of the man's family to pay an adequate bride-price and on the willingness of his family to give the traditional presents at the various points of the marriage ceremony. The fact that the price is pathetically small and the presents mean and pitiable to alien eyes should not blind us to the poetic value they have to the people themselves. Ben Jonson was able to make great poetry out of Volpone's passion for wealth. Marlowe found equal inspiration in the argosies of the Jew of Malta. Shakespeare uses the same motif in *The Merchant of Venice*. To a Gond or Pardhan a seer of haldi or five kuro of salt are equally potent to stir the emotions and awake romance.

The business side of the marriage begins with the engagement. This is generally arranged shortly before the marriage. It is rare to find boys and girls, as in Bastar, betrothed in youth, and indeed if the boy's family delays unduly in coming for the marriage the girl's parents may give her to someone else. The procedure of a Gond betrothal is not elaborate and there are no extended symbolic dialogues. The boy's parents come to the girl's house and when they are asked their business say, 'O there is nothing special. But we hear you have goods in your house.' 'Yes it is true that we have goods here and when the right people come they will take them away.' Then the boy's parents say again, 'We are thirsty and we have come for water.' If the girl's parents are agreeable they bid them drink from their well, but otherwise they say that the stream is dry and they have no water. The Baiga expression is: 'I have come to find a gourd in which to put my seed.'

Once the girl's parents have signified that they are willing, the boy's father cuts up a betel-nut and offers it to the girl's father. He says, 'No, give it to her mother.' But the mother says, 'No, give it to him first, for I only do what he considers right.' Then at last the girl's father takes it and says, 'With laughter and pleasure I have received a gift.'

Both parties then proceed to a long discussion of the terms of the bride-price and the date of the marriage and when these are settled the boy's parents return home.

Some time later the boy's parents go again with gifts for the bride and on this occasion the elders of the girl's village are invited. The girl is dressed in the main house, where the gods live and the food is cooked, with the clothes and ornaments sent by her future husband and the betrothal is ratified with liquor in the presence of the people.

Finally a day or two before the marriage, the boy's father goes with the full bride-price. If this is paid in grain it is measured in the presence of a Panch. The business side of the marriage, except for the presents that are to be given in the course of the ceremony, is now complete and as the boy's father goes away they say to him, 'Send the Water-Carrier soon; if he is late we will return your gifts and give the girl to another.'

THE MARRIAGE: THE FIRST DAY

Going to fetch the Girl. On the day before the marriage ceremonies are due to begin, the bridegroom's parents send a youth who is called the Bisti¹ or Water-Carrier with one companion to fetch the bride. He has to take with him a load of wood, a bundle of leaves, some haldi, a bottle of liquor, two bits of wheat-bread, and the bridegroom's dhoti with which to cover the bride. When they reach the girl's house the messengers are treated with the greatest ignominy. The people send them to fetch water to collect cow-dung. They make them sweep and cow-dung the girl's court and the courts of five of the villagers. If the Bisti refuses he is beaten and driven away. He is made to clean the kodai and bidden prepare food for the marriage party. The young girls of the house tease him mercilessly. They disguise the bride and bring out another girl

¹ This word is usually pronounced in Hindi Bhisti, but the local people always say Bisti: the name is given because the messenger has to fetch and carry.

for him to take away. When he opens the bridegroom's dhoti to cover her they throw ashes and oil and if any one can write he inscribes filthy words upon it. When he finds he has the wrong girl he has to give a fine of a bottle of liquor. At last he discovers the real bride and then her mother takes her in her lap and she begins to sing the farewell songs.

291

How have you brought the *chila* bread?
 How have you brought the milk, mother?
 I have brought the bread in a dish
 I have brought the milk in a pot.

And so on, addressing every relative in turn.

292

FATHER, had I been your son
 I would have stayed to thatch the roof
 To take the cattle out to graze
 To drive the plough across your field
 But I was born your enemy
 A daughter who must go away
 At home I used to laugh and dance
 Today I leave you weeping
 The crane despairs beside the lake
 Your enemy weeps on the threshold
 Your daughter weeps on the threshold.

The Preparation of the Girl. It is now approaching the evening of the first day and the mother and other relatives prepare the girl for her departure.

The main point of the preparation is the anointing with the yellow turmeric which forms the most striking part of the marriage colour-scheme. All day women have been grinding the haldi, singing as they do so a rather monotonous song.

293

WHERE does the grindstone come from?
 Where does the haldi come from?
 O the grindstone comes from Ramnagar
 The haldi comes from Haldinagar.
Tari nāni nāna re tari nāni nāna!

Who will take the grindstone?
 Who will take the haldi?
 Her father's father will take the grindstone
 Her father's mother will take the haldi.
Tari nāni nāna re tari nāni nāna!
 How shall I carry the grindstone?
 How shall I carry the haldi?
 You will carry the grindstone on a buffalo
 You will carry the haldi on a bullock.
Tari nāni nāna re tari nāni nāna!
 How many miles must we carry the grindstone?
 How many miles must we carry the haldi?
 O you must carry the grindstone a mile
 O you must carry the haldi for two.
Tari nāni nāna re tari nāni nāna!
 Where are we to unload the grindstone?
 Where are we to unload the haldi?
 O you must unload the grindstone at the entrance
 to the booth.
 O you must unload the haldi at the door of the house.
Tari nāni nāna re tari nāni nāna!

Then the young girls of the house begin to ask the bride riddles which she is bound to answer on pain of not being allowed to go for her wedding. They sing, grumbling at the haldi sent by the bridegroom's family :

294

THE bridegroom's mother is up to tricks
 She has sent black bhilwan oil
 Our bride is but a child
 She cannot bear that oil.

This preparation, which goes on all the evening, is a serious and important business, for it aims at removing the bride and bridegroom from *le monde profane* into *le monde sacré*, where at a critical period they will be safe from the attacks of witch or ghost. It is impossible to avoid being reminded of the evening before an operation, the diet, the purge, the shaving of the body, the painting yellow of the skin with picric acid, the rendering of the patient someone

aseptic and separate and apart, in the midst of great dangers but with still greater recourses to his hand.

On this evening, therefore, both bride and bridegroom in their separate houses are prepared. They are covered with the haldi paste. Heavy silver torcs are put round their necks. They are given iron betel-cutters to hold. On their wrists are put bracelets of Virgin Iron—made of the first iron extracted from a new furnace, the ore having been dug from a new pit, a very potent demon-scarer.

This evening the family refuses to let the girl depart, and the Bisti has to doss down somewhere in the village for the night.

The Making of the Marriage-Booth. In the meantime, at the bridegroom's house the omens have been taken, and the marriage-booth has been prepared. The officiants of the marriage are chosen. The Dosi is the Master of Ceremonies who directs the proceedings. The Suasa is the bridegroom's 'brother', almost the Best Man. Both bride and bridegroom have Suasins, close, but not strictly defined, relations, who are something more than bridesmaids.

In the afternoon the Dosi takes the youths of the village out into the jungle to cut wood for the booth. They go to a sarai or dumar tree and say, 'We have come to take you for the marriage; will you give your branches or no?' The tree, speaking through one of those present, may say, 'No, go to the west or east' and the party goes on until the tree says, 'Yes, I will give my branches.' Then they worship the tree and cut it down and the Dosi distributes to the party a ceremonial meal.

Then with the boughs of the tree and a small log of saleh wood on their shoulders the party returns home, singing,

295

Cut down, cut down
The many-leaved bamboo
Cut, cut the leafy boughs
Bring leafy branches for the booth
And lay them close together
Or moon and sun
Will burn my bride
And my bride will die of thirst.

When they reach the front of the house they pile up the branches and the village women who have assembled to greet them try to capture the log of saleh. There is a vigorous struggle between men and women for its possession, the result of which is believed to show whether a girl or a boy will be the first fruit of the marriage or whether the husband or wife will have the ascendancy in the house.

After this the log is taken aside to be shaped and patterned into the Mangrohi and the boys are escorted into the court of the house by the women singing,

296

THE mango swings against the sky
O my sweet enemy, take my life
And I will care for yours.

297

O THE mango in the valley
O the creeper on the hill
Come to me, my love
And I will hide you in my dress.

Then still singing the boys build a large booth in the middle of the court with the boughs of the sarai; if possible, mango and bamboo branches are added. Mango leaves are strung on a cord and tied round the booth. The Mangrohi is placed in the centre and a small plantain tree and a saleh branch planted beside it. This Mangrohi is a carved wooden post, probably phallic in origin, two to four feet high, round which the bridal pair will perambulate.

While the booth is being built the women prepare the kalsa. The kalsa is an earthen pot which is filled with rice and closed with a small earthen lamp. It is often beautifully decorated with coloured grains of unhusked rice fixed to its surface with cow-dung. As they decorate the pots the women sing,

298

WHO will tattoo the kalsa?
The seven Suasins are asleep in the booth.
Who will tattoo the kalsa?

The bridegroom's sister is the sugar of love.
She will tattoo the kalsa.

299

KALSA, kalsa, where were you born?
Kalsa, kalsa, where were you shaped?
At Tikra-Domra I was born
In the potter's house I was shaped.
Kalsa, kalsa, who bought you?
Your grown-up darling daughter.
Kalsa, kalsa, who paid for you?
Your grand-mother took me
Your father paid.

Haldi, haldi, where were you born?
Haldi, haldi, where were you shaped?
In Koeli-Kachhar I was born
In the gardener's house I was shaped.
Haldi, haldi, who bought you?
Your grown-up darling daughter.
Haldi, haldi, who paid for you?
Your grand-father took me
Your mother paid.

Now a small mud platform has to be made round the Mangrohi. Omens are taken to show where the earth for this should be dug. A procession, led by the Suasin carrying lighted lamps on their heads, goes into the garden and some earth is dug up with a rice-husker. The women fill their saris with it and carry it back to the booth, singing as they come:

300

O WHENCE comes the deer dancing and leaping?
O where is the green grass on which she will graze?
She has come to graze on the green grass of Patangarh
Let us make the deer sit on her throne
We will wash her in water from the decorated vessel
We will make her sit in the green booth's shade.

Then the earth is mixed with water and a little platform is made. Two small slabs of wood are also placed there to be put under the feet of bride and bridegroom 'for they are

Raja and Rani for two-and-a-half days and their feet must never touch the ground.' As the platform is being plastered the women sing,

301

WHO will plaster the Mangrohi?
The seven Suasin are asleep in the booth
Who will plaster the Mangrohi?
The bridegroom's brother is the sugar of love
He will plaster the Mangrohi with earth.

THE SECOND DAY

The Blessing of the Relatives. We now return to the bride's village. On the morning of the second day she must be up early and sit with her family singing of the sorrow she feels at leaving them. These songs, some of which are sung by the bride to express her emotion, and some of which are sung by her friends to try to make her weep, are used throughout the ceremony. A few specimens are given here.

302

SHE is going to her husband's house
And leaves her brother weeping
When I go to bathe
I will see you standing there
I will say, Where has she gone
Who used to bring me water?
When I go to the bazaar
I will see you standing there
I will say, Where has she gone
For whom I used to bring anklets?
When I go to the river
I will see you standing there
I will say, Where has she gone
Who used to wash my clothes?

303

FLYING flying the parrot
Settled on my nose-pin
It pecked at it and spoilt it
How dare you, parrot of the woods?
For I brought that old nose-pin
From my mother's house.

304

How fine is my brother with his creaking shoes
And the blue bow in his hand
Brother, as you care for the shoes on your feet
Care for me as well
You have tethered the cow under your tree
But you have let the calf wander alone
To a stranger's land.
The cow is moaning under the tree
The calf has gone to a stranger's land.

She weeps, and goes on to address her mother :

305

MOTHER, why did you not eat castor-seeds
And make your body barren of a girl?
Why did you not take ginger and pipal leaves
That your womb would bear a boy?

Now she remembers what her elder brother used to say
to her, and weeps again :

306

BROTHER, you used to say
How happily my little sister
Goes with her friends
To bring water in a small-lipped pot
And now that pot is broken, sister
As our companionship is broken
How can that wicked pot be mended?
How can we come together again?
A potter will mend the broken pot
At mother's house we will meet again.

Then she remembers what her sister used to say to her,
and weeps again :

307

THE bed on which we used to sit
Touching thigh to thigh
Was made of thin cord
And now that bed is broken

As our companionship is broken
How can that wicked bed be mended?
How can we come together again?
A carpenter will mend that wicked bed
At mother's house we will meet again.

After the weeping songs are over the girl stands in front of the Water-Carrier and blesses all her relatives, but specially her brothers and sisters :

308

SHE said to her father, O father
You were greedy for the bride-price
Today I have repaid the milk
She said to her brother, O brother
Accept the blessing of your enemy.

309

How long, my brother, will this rice remain?
How long will my blessing last?
Your girl, the enemy, is on her way
To a foreign land
Only your own earnings will remain
I go to a foreign land
May your cows and buffaloes increase
While I go to a foreign land.

310

You could get no liquor, brother
And you sold me to get liquor
My being at home troubled you
But you'll be happy now you've turned me out
Bring me grain in a winnowing-fan
And before I leave this house
I will bless my home
And everyone who lives there.

Her brother comes weeping with a winnowing-fan full of kodon. She puts it in her lap and sits on the threshold. He sits with his back to her, holding out his cloth behind him. She pours the kodon into his cloth, blessing it and sings again,

311

IF I live I'll come to meet you.
 If I die I'll never see you more.

The Water-Carrier has to be ready to catch the bride directly she has finished, for immediately after the last blessing she tries to escape into the house and if she succeeds he must pay a fine.

But if he is lucky, he is able to catch her and at once slings her on his back and carries her out of the court into the road. There the neighbours bring sugar-water or milk and make the girl drink it and put little presents into her hand. When this is done, the Water-Carrier with the bride on his back, and several of her little sisters trying to climb on as well, sets out with the bride's party for the bridegroom's house and village. Before they leave the house they sing :

312

O BROTHER, as you've given me so much
 From me take this blessing
 Eat and drink in your house
 Live for age after age
 And for a hundred thousand years
 May your court be beautiful as moonlight
 May it always be clean with fresh cow-dung
 Let there be cows and bullocks put together
 May you grow old with your yoke-fellow of equal age
 May your house be full of sons and their wives
 Though your fate is written in another land
 Let us meet fifty-two times in a year
 If we live let us meet often
 In this treacherous world
 Even the iron bar gets rusted
 What faith then can we put in human life?
 I am all alone, my brother
 If you forget me
 Who will there be to ask after me?

313

THE beautiful bride is adorning her body
 O God, she is deserting the door of her mother.

As they go along on the way they sing Dadaria songs :

314

THE stick is only of bamboo
But it has a silver knob
The meeting of two friends
Is like mango pickle to the lips
How sweet your voice sounds
Heard from the street.

315

How black your hair is
By the play and beauty of your eyes
You made me your friend.

The Meeting of the Families. As they approach the boundary of the other village the people come out to meet them. They bring a litter for the bride's mother, a horse for her father and a pot of liquor. There then follows a ceremonial meeting between the parents of the bride and the parents of the bridegroom, a ceremony which is of great importance in emphasizing the fact that the marriage is more than a union of two young lives, but is a formal alliance or renewal of an alliance between two families. Liquor is drunk and leaf-pipes ceremonially exchanged. When this is done the bride's party is escorted into the village and the bride is taken to her *janwās* or camp which she and her party will use as their headquarters throughout the proceedings.

It is now that there begins that peculiar feature of a marriage ceremony, the exchange of the filthiest abuse between the two parties, which results, as W. G. Archer has said, in 'release of repressed energy which when applied to the marriage must necessarily make it fertile.' On this day most of the abuse is given by the bride's party. They are still in a superior position and they go everywhere *dang-dangūke*, or proudly, not caring for anybody. If they are offended, they declare that they will go away and not give their girl. Their temper and abuse is more than symbolic. There is often a real feeling of resentment towards the people who are taking a girl out of their clan and home.

316

THE bridegroom's mother
Has eaten bunches of castor-leaves
And now sits with reddened teeth
Like a prostitute.

317

THE bridegroom is sitting
His teeth red with betel
And looking like a pimp.

318

GIVE me, son, your golden comb
And I will do your hair
For twelve kos lies your matted hair
Full of eight score scorpions
Where have you come from, Jogi-fakir
To carry off my maiden?

The Mock Fight. The natural sequence of this exchange of abuse is the mock fight with wooden swords between the two parties. The fight is as much a dance as anything else and there is a regular system of the clashing of swords and ferocious movements. After the fight, men and women begin to dance.

319

Bride's party :

HALF the stream is full of flowers
The other half of bread
Let the bridegroom's mother
Embrace him openly.

Bridegroom's party :

Bride, why did you come so late
To eat our spinach?
You slept with your own brother
And then you came to us.

It is worth noting that, as in Bastar, it is considered very unlucky if anything is dropped on the ground during this

dance. If a man's turban is knocked off there is a real quarrel; the bride's party declare that they will go away and the bridegroom's people have to spread the offending turban on the ground in front of them before they will forgive the insult.

320

My wanton samdhin is a great milk-giver
Bring a pot and we'll go to milk her
One day we'll milk her
Two days we'll milk her
Three days we'll make it into curds
We'll churn it *ghamar ghamar*
And turn it into buttermilk
We'll knead it *gadar phadar*
And turn it into butter
We'll cook it *karak karak*
And turn it into ghee
And slop it over the bridegroom's head.

The 'Neng'. Before the bride's people consent to settle down in their camp they demand a number of gifts. These are known as the *neng* and are demanded at intervals throughout the whole proceedings. When the bride is to be fed she refuses to eat until she is promised a present. When the people come for tika the Suasin refuse to let them do it until they are rewarded. When bride and bridegroom wish to enter the house they are prevented by little girls until they bribe them with a gift. So now the bride's party demands cloth for the bride's mother and grandmother and various other presents. Only when these are given they agree to settle down in their camp and to allow the bridegroom's party to anoint the girl with haldi and oil. Even now the bride is hidden somewhere and a wrong girl is produced. When at last she is found, the bridegroom's party attempt to feed her with ceremonial bread, but she refuses until they promise to give her ornaments. This is her one chance of getting them. The boy's mother exclaims, 'Daughter, the whole house and all that is in it is yours, what more do you need?' But the girl insists on her presents.

The Anointing. Both bride and bridegroom are now anointed with haldi. Seven women place their hands, palm

upwards, on their heads and an arrow is put above the hands.
They sing all the time :

321

O ELDER sister, bring fresh cow-dung
And prepare the four corners of the room
Do not let the lines of flour run crooked
But go as straight as moon and sun
So all the city folk will come to gaze
And your name will long remain.

322

BLACK clouds gather
Rain patters down
O brother, let go your little calf
That she may feed
On the tender shoots of grass.

Oil is poured down the arrow and allowed to trickle all over the body. Then five virgin girls touch feet, knees, hands and forehead (in that order) with haldi and the Suasin cover them with haldi seven times. This is the Haldi Chaghana, or 'making the haldi climb'.

323

THE first oil has climbed
The second oil has climbed
And with the oil Narayan Deo
Brother, cast the shadow of your sword
The clear shadow of your sword
Brother, cast the shadow of your cloth
Your cloth studded with diamonds.

324

IN the bridegroom's land
Haldi is costly
In the bridegroom's land
Haldi is plentiful
O my grown-up darling !

325

THEY have gone to the Forest of Joy
They have brought back sandalwood
They will put it on your head
May there be much haldi
May there be much silver
In your house.

326

THE moon said, I am great, I am great
The sun said, No I am great, I am great
Haldi said, I am small, I am great
Who is making the haldi climb?
Brother is making the haldi climb
Why do you look so cheerless, bride?
Why droops your body like a flower?

Bride and bridegroom are picked up by the Suasin and carried round the booth. Once again the people try to make the bride weep and the women exclaim, 'How sorrowful a gift is a daughter, for she makes us weep not only at her death but while she lives.'

An old woman sings,

327

My daughter grew as quickly
As a tender shoot of grass
And never will she be able
To return the milk she drank.

And the bride replies,

O mother, I grew as quickly
As a tender shoot of grass
And I never will be able
To return the milk you gave me.

Sometimes the girl remembers a dead brother :

328

MOTHER bring a ladder
Pull down, pull down

The star in the sky
 For my marriage
 Mother bring him down.

329

THE bride weeps sitting in the house
 Today my father has made me
 A stranger in my own home
 The crane weeps in the Forest of Joy
 The peacock weeps in the Forest of Sandalwood.

The Ceremonial Bath. After this, while the people stand round and sing, the bride and bridegroom in their separate places are given ceremonial baths. Crowns, which used to be made of leaves of the date palm but are now often of coloured paper, are put on their heads and the hair of each is plaited into a seven-fold braid. During this, which involves a long and tedious wait for the guests, the Sajani songs are sung. The dancing becomes wild and exciting and is accompanied by the throb of the drums and the clashing of brass plates and cymbals.

330

WHERE are the twice-seven drums thundering?
 Where the groom is sitting on his platform
 Bridegroom, you have dressed so carefully
 Where are you going?
 Where my darling girl is to be married
 There I am going.
 How will you tread on a stranger's heel?
 I cannot say but, mother, I am going to her
 I will pay the Heel-price
 And so I will tread on her.
 But, son, there are monsters on the way.
 I will feed them on grain
 But without fail I must go to her.
 How will you tread on another's door?
 I will pay the Door-price
 And I will get a water-girl for you.
 How will you catch the hand
 Of a stranger's daughter, son?
 I will pay the Hand-price
 And take her by the hand.

The Shivdan (Heel-Price), Duardan (Door-Price) and Hathdan (Hand-Price) are various Neng or Hindrances, when the marriage is interrupted until the boy promises a gift to his bride or her relatives.

331

DRESS, bridegroom, dress yourself
Who brought the dhoti to tie round your waist?
My grandfather's weaver brought it.

Dress, bridegroom, dress yourself
Who brought the turban to tie round your brow?
My father's weaver brought it.

Dress, bridegroom, dress yourself
Who brought the crown to put on your head?
My brother's weaver brought it.

332

If there was a well in the middle of the court
And its mouth was covered with heavy stones
And across it lay a plank
There our daughter would sit and bathe
And the city folk would come to gaze
And our name would long remain

The Giving of the Ring. The *chulmundri* ring is a mixture of iron and copper and the giving of it is an important part of the ceremony. The bride is taken to the path in front of the house. As the bridegroom is carried out to join her, she sings,

333

O BROTHER, put on your creaking shoes
Take your cudgel in your hand
Mount the spotted colt
Beat this hunchback this side and that
Drive this trifier home again
Give him five rupees, my brother
How nice he looks
But inside he is cruel
Give him five rupees, my brother
So that he'll go home
Give him five rupees, my brother
Let him go away!

The groom is then seated beside her and a cloth is stretched above their heads and a wooden sword placed between them. The bridegroom, holding the ring in his mouth, catches the girl's right hand with one hand. She clenches her fist as hard as she can, but at last he gets it open and slips the ring on the third finger. In return she puts an iron ring on the corresponding finger of his right hand.

Bride and groom are then given a little meal of *chila-roti*, *halwa* and *khichri*. This is the first time that they eat together. Friends put the food into their mouths and while they are eating the women again try to make the bride weep. Son and mother sing tender exchanges.

334

Son :

How did you make the bread, mother?
Why is your body withering?

Mother :

Son, why do you say
That my body is withering?
Take a mouthful of milk from my breast
Take two mouthfuls of bread
My darling grown-up son.

Son :

Mother, I have taken
Milk from your breast
Mother, I have taken
Bread from your hands.

The Tying of the Knot. Now comes the Dosi and ties bride and groom together. In the knots are put an areca nut, a copper coin and a bit of virgin haldi.

Kuāri Bhānwar. Bride and bridegroom are then taken round the marriage pole three times; but this is only a preliminary ceremony and is not yet binding upon them. The bride goes in front and is followed by the groom who has to tread upon her heels. They are followed by a number of people holding wooden swords above their heads. There is a lot of horse-play; men and women throw mud and cow-dung at each other, the drums thunder and the women never

stop singing. They especially taunt the unmarried girls who are present.

335

THE saja tree withers on the mountain
The goinja grows old on the hill
May that family decay
That lets its daughters grow old in the house.

336

THE wheat is killed by rust
The pulse is ruined by frost
The mahua tree is struck by lightning
And all the liquor-vendors weep.

Bride and groom sit down and there is a preliminary tika ceremony when their close relatives come and make marks of oil and haldi on their foreheads. As they come, the women sing :

337

IN the father's house there grew a fragrant tree
Its scent spread through the world
The bees swarmed round it
O father, send a flower to your father and mother
When he heard the news, grandfather saddled his horse
Grandmother prepared her litter
Dip dip dip dip the litter came
Hin hin hin hin came the horse
O mother, light the golden kalsa
And bring it to the marriage-booth.

The Game of the Grindstone. Now some of the relatives bring out a grindstone such as is used for crushing spices, and carry it about as if it was a baby. They throw it to one another and cry, 'Look out, it may fall and break its head.'

Just before the binding part of the ceremony comes the Haldi Utna, when bride and groom are anointed with oil and haldi, but downwards, from head to feet.

338

THE first oil has climbed
 The second oil has climbed
 May brother bridegroom climb the mountain
 How thick the oil is everywhere
 Down his legs runs the oil of rye
 The Teli is weary of pressing it out
 He has gone mad with pressing it out
 So bring the oil of til
 Green, green are the branches of the booth.

339

OUT of the house she comes
 To the green, green marriage-booth
 But why is her body drooping?
 Why is your mind so sad, my bride
 Why droops your body like a flower?
 Without my mother, my mind is sad
 Without my father, my body droops
 If today your mother were living
 She would have shaded your head with her cloth
 If today your father were living
 He would have guarded you with his sword
 I have plucked a flower
 And sent it to call them
 Go, go, little flower
 To the land of my father and mother
 Now mother is coming in a litter
 And father is coming on a horse
 Mother, here is your loving child
 Mother, take her for a moment in your lap
 Henceforth she will be a stranger to you.

A remarkable song is sometimes sung about this time, when the bride communes with her dead grandfather.

340

The bride :

WHO have brought the gods in their hands?
 Grandfather has brought the gods
 Grandmother has brought the gods

Awake, awake, grandfather
Why do you sleep day and night?
You eat nothing day and night
Awake, grandfather, and eat
From whose hands, my grandfather,
Do you get your cup of liquor?

The bride's dead grandfather replies :

I get it from my son-in-law
You have given me strong liquor
And you have enchanted me
Don't say anything, my daughter
This is no time for you to speak
Once only, daughter, could I wash your feet
I can't do it again
Live long, my daughter, I have washed your feet
Had I died before, my daughter
I had not been honoured with the gods
Live long and well, my daughter
Had I died before, my daughter
How had you remembered me?
Now you have enchanted me
By buying strong liquor for me
How can I not listen to your word?

The bride :

O Kalarin girl
You have enchanted him
With strong liquor
Bought with my money.

The Kalarin :

For money I gave strong liquor
I have not killed a cow
It was liquor for your marriage
How have I sinned
As if I had killed a cow?

The Bare Bhānwar. Bride and groom are now prepared for the essential part of the ceremony. The Kotwar stands up and proclaims, 'The Rani and Raja of two-and-a-half days are coming. Keep your sight pure.' The bride's Suasin

leads the way holding the bride's left hand by the little finger. She has a pot of water in her free hand and lets a few drops fall to the ground as she goes along. Then comes the bridegroom holding a betel-cutter in the left hand which the bride grasps in her right. They are followed by a party of 'soldiers' guarding them with wooden swords and other people who throw rice at them. The bridegroom again must press the bride's heels as often as possible with his toes. Women sing abuse as the procession goes slowly seven times round the Mangrohi. 'Look at the fox gaping from side to side,' 'Look at the brother-in-law of a monkey, he does not know how to walk, that brother-in-law of a pig, that hunchback. Fie on him', and so on.

The Ceremonial Greeting. Bride and groom then sit down under the booth, their Suasin immediately behind them. A dish of haldi is placed before them and a pot of water, and everyone comes in turn for the ceremonial greeting. First they wash their feet, then put a mark of rice and haldi on their foreheads with similar offerings of haldi to the Mangrohi and the kalsa pot, and finally give any present that they may have brought. When the mother comes, the girl cries, 'O mother, you have given me a body, but you have not given me luck.' After the father has done tika, he shouts, 'Listen all of you, today I am giving my daughter a cow and ornaments'—whatever it may be. While this continues, women break into the wild disordered Birha dance.

341

My feet itch for sounding anklets
 My forehead itches for a spangle
 My life itches for a slender girl
 Let me search for her in the bazaar.

342

Tew tew tew cries the lapwing
 In the nest eggs lie tip to tip
 The brown pigeon and the blue
 And flying away together.

This is a long and tedious ceremony. When it is finished the attendants have to massage the stiff legs of bride and bridegroom. Finally the young husband takes his wife into

his house. A cloth is spread on the ground up to the door and the bridegroom walks on it into the house followed by his wife. She first bows to the threshold and then, raising the cloth behind her, goes reverently in.

The knot is now untied and husband and wife come out and salute everybody. This is the first time in their lives that they have touched the feet of their relatives or 'kissed' them, for this is not done by unmarried children.

The Marriage Feast. It is now evening and the marriage feast begins. Directly it is over, every member of the bride's party must run away. It is regarded as a curse if any of them remain in the bridegroom's village. The women dress up the bride in a boy's clothes and try to carry her off. The bridegroom has to catch her and give money or liquor to the party to ensure that she is left behind.

The Consummation of the Marriage. There is no ceremonial, as in Bastar and among many Hindu castes, for the consummation of the marriage. On this night the girl goes and sleeps among other girls of her own age-group and the boy goes to sleep with the other boys. But the boys soon begin to say to him, 'Why are you alone? Was all the work we have done today in vain?' At last he goes to where the girls are sleeping and finds his wife and says, 'Come, let us go to sleep in the little hut.' She is bound to protest, 'I will scream, I won't go, why should I go?' When he tries to force her, she says, 'Why didn't you marry your mother?' But at last he pulls her away into his hut saying, 'Have I spent all this money just to look at you from a distance?'

THE THIRD DAY

The Visit to the Bride's Home. On the morning of this day bride and bridegroom go for what is known as the *Chauthiya Barāt*. They go in procession singing songs.

343

How often I've warned the young cowherd
Not to go to a Gond village
For Gond girls flicker like lightning
They stop the boys on the way
Now they have stolen your stick
And other cows have eaten your fodder.

When they reach the village the bride's mother greets them and washes their feet. They go into the house and give a ceremonial greeting to the girl's parents. The husband gives a bottle of liquor to his father-in-law saying, 'Take this, for I have come to see the roof-tree of your house' and he looks up at it. He also gives food to the family and when they have eaten they say, 'Let us go and untie the knot in the river'.

The Procession to the River. Bride and groom are now tied together and are taken in procession to the nearest stream or river. As they go boys and girls sing Dadaria antiphonally.

344

COME to the bank of the sparkling river
And I will show you what is in my heart.

345

You catch the fish and I will cook it
The love of my friend takes me out of the world.

346

COME to the deep stream and take your vows
Holding water in your hands.

347

THEY are all working in the field
My girl, meet me down by the river.

348

O MY girl, somehow I will catch you
Even if you hide beneath the water,
I will drag you out.

When they reach the river their wedding garments are removed and the bride's Suasin sits down on the bank with her feet in the water. The bridegroom sits in her lap, the bride in his. He unties the plaits into which his wife's hair has been woven and she turns round and unties his, a little rite that probably symbolizes mutual help in domestic matters. Then a pot of cold water is emptied over them and the bride

jumps up and runs into the river. Her husband has to chase her and beat her once or twice with his clenched fist.

The bride now picks up the kalsa pot and wades out into the stream with her Suasin. They hide the pot under water, and the bridegroom has to go out and find it. Then he hides it and his wife has to find it.

The Shooting of the Deer. Bride and bridegroom bathe and are dressed again in their marriage garments and once more tied together. The bride puts the kalsa on her head and her husband takes a bow and arrow in his hand. They begin the procession back to the house, but after they have gone a few yards they stop and some way ahead of them a model of a deer made of leaves is placed on the ground; the husband has to shoot this through the loophole made by his wife's arm as it holds the pot on her head. First of all she puts bread and sugar in his mouth with her free hand without turning round and 'feeds' the bow and arrow in the same way. Then the boy must shoot the deer. He must do it seven times and should he miss, it is considered most unfortunate.

The Rite of the Wooden Babies. When they get back to the house the bride's parents bring out two little slips of coloured wood and swing them to and fro in their arms. 'They have gone to hunt the deer; don't cry, my children.' Then water is poured over them. 'Look', they cry, 'the babies are weeping.' More water is poured and they say, 'Look, the babies are pissing.' At last, they tip them into the fold of the bride's sari and make her clasp them to her breast.

A feast follows and now is the turn for the bridegroom's party to return the abuse that they had borne so patiently on the previous day. There is a great battle of wits but the most insulting and dirty language can be used without offence. The abusive songs used earlier in the marriage are called Bhadauni: these are the Sadauro.

349

THE wedding-party comes
By the bank of the river
Shouting they are going to eat a pig
To eat a pig
But the impotent fools

Where will they get a pig?
 Let them feed on the vaginae
 Of their own little sisters
 Cutting them *khot khot* into little bits
 They come shouting they are going to drink water
 To drink water
 But the impotent fools
 Where will they get water?
 Let them dig in the vaginae
 Of their own little sisters
 And scoop out the water
Dum dum from those little wells.

350

MAY a scorpion bite you
 As you get up and down
 May a scorpion bite you
 As you make your bed
 May a scorpion bite you
 As you sleep with your man.

351

THERE are bunches of supari
 In the garden of coconuts
 My samdhin's hair-band is red
 Come take her to the brinjal garden
 But there the thorns prick her
 Come take her to the bank of the river
 But there it is very cold
 Come take her to your attic
 It is our brother's attic
 There are ten beds and he uses them all
 Sister, may your nose be burnt
 Below there is a bed
 Above are the stars
 My brother sleeps above
 My samdhin lies below.

This night husband and wife stay in the bride's house and again go to bed separately. But again at midnight, 'when the lamps have burnt low', the bridegroom takes his wife saying, 'Come to my bed.' 'How can I come?' she

says, 'I am ashamed to do it in my mother's house.' But she goes all the same.

352

THERE were two friends, a crab and a frog
They decided that one of them should marry a prawn
So the crab married her
At the marriage that clever water-snake played the drum
The snake asked, How did you find such a beautiful bride
What medicine did you use?
I spent eight cowries, and bought the medicine
And made her mad with love for me
From Ramnagar came a scorpion
And played the cymbals without being asked
Then all the children began to scream.

353

I HAVE seen a wonder
A monkey milked a cow
It put the milk in an earthen pot
And took the curds to sell.

THE FOURTH DAY

Early in the morning the bridegroom says, 'Now let us go'. After a final feast for near relatives in the house, the bride bids a last farewell to her parents, and they sing the 'weeping' songs.

354

WHAT a sweet and lovely parrot it was
It climbed and climbed on the top of the house
It was singing all the time
O mother, you have sold that talking parrot
What greed possessed you, mother
To sell that beautiful parrot?
How long will the money last, mother?
But you sent your parrot to live lonely in the jungle
You will open the bag
You will peep at the rupees
But your parrot has gone into exile
O what a sweet and beautiful parrot it was
That climbed about the branches of your tree!

355

O FATHER, you get a pile of rupees
But for me there's only a heap of broken earthenware
O father, for you there's a lot of liquor
But for me there's only water from the river
O mother, for you there's a beautiful sari
But for me there's only a spider's web.

356

THE mango and the tamarind
Bloom in her father's garden
The parrot eats the leaves
Take grain in your hand
And comfort this poor parrot
For she is flying to a stranger's tree
Come down, come down, my parrot
Come rest in my lap
I will console you, my parrot
For you are flying away to a stranger's tree.

357

YOU have tied the cow beneath the tree
You have driven out the calf
To wander in a strange land
You have pulled up the thorn-bush with its roots
You have bent down the parsa tree to the ground
O brother, I was never bent down by your words
But now a stranger's words will bend me.

358

A LAMP shines on the hill
Whose love is shining there?
The haldi is climbing on Ram-Lakshman
His love is shining
Green green she issues from the house
Outside the bride's dear body droops
The haldi is climbing on Sita-Janaki
His love is shining
Why do you look sad, my bride?
Why droops your body like a flower?
She mourns for her father,

Her mother, her brother
That is why her body droops
Her dear body, like a flower.

Should she be too young to live with her husband—child-marriages are slowly invading tribal country—the youth goes home by himself. But more commonly he takes his bride with him. As they go, the villagers come and give the girl milk to drink and put small presents in her cloth.

When they reach home, the boy's relatives come out to greet them. An old woman of the grandmother class brings a pestle and a curd-churner tied together and decorated with sarai leaves, passing it seven times to and fro above their heads. Then the boy's Suasin do Sigh—they warm their hands at the flame burning in the kalsa lamp and put the warmth with their hands on their foreheads. Many people come forward to perform this pretty little rite of welcome. Then the parents ceremonially take the newly-married pair into the house. They sit them down and give them food, saying to the girl, 'This is your house and door. It is no longer ours. If you give us food, we will eat; if you deny us, we will starve. Look at the door, it will be as great as you make it, it will be as small as you make it, but now it is for you to rule.' And to the boy they say, 'Hitherto you were alone, now you are tied to another; keep within your own boundary. Hitherto you went here and there and met whom you would; now live in your own home. Look at her face, keep her well, she belongs to another's house. Be good to her'.

Conclusion. We have already spoken of this ceremony as a work of art. There is little religion in it, but it has great social and symbolic value. It is hard to conceive of a better way of impressing on a man and woman their social and sexual union. The tying together of the clothes, the exchange of rings, the first meals together, the processions hand-in-hand, the sitting together with the knees closely pressed against one another, the ceremonies by the river that symbolize mutual aid in domestic, sexual and food-obtaining activities, are of great significance. They are all the more important because some of them are things that a boy and girl would never do publicly together. When they sit 'thigh to thigh' in front of everyone, they feel they really belong to one another.

TECHNIQUE OF THE MARRIAGE SONGS

THE following examples will illustrate the form and music of the marriage-songs.

SONG FOR TATTOOING THE KALSA

359



Aranda baranda kai tathiya kalsāla kon goday O
Dulaha ke bahini māyāgur kalsāla ohi goday O.

THERE are many kinds of pots
 But who will tattoo the kalsa?
 The bridegroom's sister is the sugar of love
 She will tattoo it.

SONG AT THE KUARI BHANWAR

360



Sāja budhāwai sāja dongariya
Ki goynja budhāwai pahār
Goynja budhāwai pahār
Bittiya budhāwai apane mayikuwa.

Old grows the saja on the hill-top
 Withers the grass in the forest
 A girl grows old in her mother's house
 Fie on such a family!

WEeping SONG

361



Ahira ke uthangan ahira ke uthangan ki pandhari ki lūthī
Mor bhaiya ke uthangan kono nahi ay
Ki bhaiya mor
More bhaiya ke uthangan kono nahi.

The cowherd's support is his white staff
 But my brother has no support
 O my brother, he has no support.

SONG DURING THE ANOINTING CEREMONY

362



Are bāri ma jaudai bāri ma jaudai
Ki bāri kareliya
Are chhichali bichhali gaise dar
Dulha hare bābu are chhichali bichhali gaise.

The creeper has spread all over my garden
 The karela in my garden
 Its branches have spread everywhere
 O brother bridegroom, they have spread everywhere.

Haldi kahāy haldi kahāy
Mai bare mai bare.
Are chanda kahāy are chhote bare.
Dulhāre bābu are haldi kahāy
Mai bare mai bare.

Haldi says, haldi says,
I am great, I am great.
O the moon says,
We are both great and small.
O brother bridegroom, the haldi says,
I am great, I am great.

SAJANI SONGS

THESE songs may be sung either during the dances or indeed at any time during the ceremony when there is a gap to be filled. The name Sajani implies their use while the bride is being dressed and adorned.

363

Cows graze scattered in the field
But buffaloes with horns together
A stranger's son, a stranger's daughter
Are sitting thigh on thigh
If you don't believe it
Come see it for yourself
They are sitting thigh on thigh.

Cows are married women who work scattered over the countryside. Buffaloes are men who work hard when they have to, but are happiest in company, joining horn to horn. But a young boy and girl sit together as close as they can, as in the marriage ceremony.

364

WHERE do the dark clouds gather?
Where do the rain-drops fall?
In the sky the dark clouds gather
On the earth the rain-drops fall
Who weeps like a rippling river?
Whose little life goes restlessly to and fro?
Who sheds tears from eyes of pearl?
Whose eyes are cold and hard?
Father weeps like a rippling river
Mother's little life goes restlessly to and fro
Brother sheds tears from eyes of pearl
But his wife's eyes are cold and hard.

Compare Herrick's 'precious-pearly-purling tears'.

365

How many colours has my samdhin?
 For she, the black cat with a long vagina
 Has married a fool of a husband
 We have come to see what work she can do
 May a scorpion bite her long vagina
 Aha! A scorpion has bitten her vagina
 She is sobbing *kalhar kalhar*
 Her brother is blowing on the place to cool it
 I said, Sister where has the scorpion bitten you?
 We have wasted all day massaging her vagina
 Yet the pain of the scorpion's bite will not go away.

It is interesting that at one point of a Kayasth marriage in the Shahabad District of Bihar when the Domkach is performed, the central figures of the pantomime are a woman who has been stung by a scorpion, another disguised as a country doctor and other women acting as servants and messengers. 'The woman knows she has been stung but cannot say where and a careful test proceeds mounting gradually from her toes, heels and shins to her knees and thighs. As her clothes are pulled back and her private parts reached the excitement and merriment come to a climax. The bite is discovered in the most improper of her parts and she declares she is cured.'¹

366

Hu Hu Hu! The horse Birbandhan
 Where shall I go the horse Birbandhan
 I Birbandhan will go to the village
Hu Hu Hu! The horse Birbandhan
 I will go to Ghunari's house
Hu Hu Hu! The horse Birbandhan
 Whom will I catch there
Hu Hu Hu! The horse Birbandhan
 I will catch Sona
Leh Leh Leh Leh! The horse Birbandhan.

The horse is not only an object of religious veneration, connected with the ecstatic trance, lucky and pure, but it

¹ W. G. Archer, *The Wedding of the Writers*, which I have been privileged to see in manuscript.

also has important sexual properties. The stallion scares away the demon of barrenness. In the *Ramayana*, Kausalya touches a stallion in the hope of getting a son, and a king and queen smell the odour of the burnt fat of a horse with the same purpose. During the Ashvamedha the queen lies at night beside the slain sacrificial horse. To the Gond and Pardhan a horse is full of sexual associations. 'When we look at a horse we think of sex'. The marriage songs are full of references to the animal, most of them very coarse. It is said that a woman will always be one of the seven kinds of horse—*argal*, which carries its rider quickly to the law-court; *nāngin*, in whose presence wealth soon leaves the home; *tanhi*, which kills its owner; *rikārshin*, with a long tooth, a devil, which should be sold as soon as possible; *jeher*, which kills any companion; *godda*, which is quarrelsome and cannot be tamed, and *padam*, the lotus horse which has white marks on the legs, and is lucky and auspicious.

367

THE hawk returning home
Looks down on field and hill
It sees the business of a girl's betrothal
It sees the marriage-party come.

368

KOEL on the mango branch
Why are you weeping?
Were your father living
He would come to meet you.

369

I CAN'T stay any longer in his house
He crams his mouth with balls of rice
But he only gives me gruel
He puts *kājal* in his eyes
And a spangle on his brow
But he doesn't even give me oil
My hands are burnt and blistered
My back is breaking *sal sal*
Through this constant husking rice
O sister, I can stay no longer in his house

370

COVER me with your cloth
Last night I nearly died of cold
In their house is milk and wheat
But she never cared for me
When she saw a boy
With his dhoti to his heels
She would run at once towards him
Like the sticky mud
Of which a hearth is made
She sticks to other boys
To other boys she showed her face
But to me she showed her buttocks
She would eat rice and pulse
All I got was dry bread
She would sleep on a soft bed
But I lay on the floor
She would put on her finest clothes
And sit on her bed with parted hair
While I went out to work.

This is a description of the experience of a Lamsena boy who was unable to bear the treatment he received from his future bride. He has now run away to another girl and is telling her how badly he had fared.

371

WHICH brother is riding the horse
And who is feeding it?
Sonsai is riding the horse
Rewa is feeding it
Tell Rewa's sister to feed the horse
If she won't, give her four-score blows
Beat her till you skin her
And make a drum with the skin
Let Rewa beat the drum
Let his own sister dance.

372

MOTHER, take this water
From the stream below the tree
Take the twigs up to the house

From this stream I will not rise
In this stream I will not rest
Till my life is ended
As the dark mud dissolves in water
So is my life dissolving
Mother, how long will you use
The grain I pounded?
Mother, how long will the water last
That your parrot carried home
When the parrot flies away?

373

ON the verandah sits your parrot
In tears complaining
Father, you have sold her
Your chattering parrot
But how long will that money last you?
With the price you got
You may build a big house
The greed for money is very tall
With the price you got
You will build a long cattle-shed
On the verandah sits your parrot
In tears complaining.

374

YOU have tied the cow under a tree, father,
But the calf you have sent to a stranger's land
How great is your lust for money
You have got it and tied it in a bundle
But you have sent your daughter to a stranger's land
How long will the money in the bundle last?
How many days will it keep you a king?

The money is, of course, the bride-price to which much more attention is sometimes paid than to the bride.

375

IN his task a servant is absorbed
By a mango the koel is ensnared
The cow is held all day at the shady resting-place
By her mother's home a girl is caught
She will never leave it unless she is sent away.

A koel never leaves a mango until it has finished it: the cattle never leave the mid-day resting-place until they are driven out by the Ahir. After marriage, a girl will not go to her husband's house until she is escorted thither with due ceremonial. An alternative interpretation is that if a girl comes to her mother's house after a quarrel, she will not return to her husband unless he comes personally to fetch her.

BIRAHA SONGS

THESE songs are used indifferently at marriages or funerals, though there is little in their subjects to connect them with either. The word 'Biraha' is said to mean 'sorrow'; and the songs are used by the Gond and Baiga while a bridegroom takes a girl to his house and after the feasting on the tenth day celebrations of a death. The singers stand in a group and sing quickly and very loudly; then the song stops and the drums begin and they dance, each alone, bending down and hopping about with great vigour.

376

THERE is no thunder in the sky today
Nor are the clouds driven to and fro
I know, I know
It was a dry cloud thundered
Fie on your earthen pot
That breaks at the first touch of water.

A girl has broken her water-pot down by the stream, and when she gets home she has to face an angry and sarcastic mother-in-law. The song accuses her of breaking the pot during a struggle with a man (dry thunder) and at the first touch of water (intercourse).

377

To the edge of the woods
Have come the thieves
The cows are safe in their shed
But the thieves have stolen the calf.

The thieves are the bridegroom's friends who carry off the calf, the bride. When sung at a funeral, the thieves are the messengers of death.

378

HALF the garden is sown with til and urid
Half with kachur
For the drummers there's five rupees
For the dancers a handful of dust.

379

ON the flat hill the fig tree has ripened
For this the parrot preens her wings
Brother prepares his rakish turban
Bhauji the parting of her hair.

380

IN Hira River I lost my diamond
In Ganga-Jamna my nose-ring
In Mai-Narbada I dropped my jacket
My young breasts are bare as a fakir.

381

THE ploughman drives his plough
His Sita brings him pej
With cracking ribs he drinks water
Open my riddle.

I have not found anyone able to solve this riddle.

382

IN July the rain falls *rim-jhim*
In August it comes pouring down
When I think of my husband
Tears rain from my eyes.

383

As you blew on the fire
Your moustache was burnt
Fie on you, virile woman
As you were cooking
Your beard was burnt
You are lucky, virile woman
The black cat
Always eats the little dove.

There is a wide-spread tradition—it exists also among the Juang, for example—that women formerly had beards and moustaches. I think the reference to the black cat at the end of the song suggests that the virile, masculine woman (not very common in aboriginal India) devours her little husband as a cat devours a dove.

384

HOOKAH says, I am the greatest
Chilam says, No I am greater
For I am feminine and so
I keep everybody happy.

The chilam or earthenware pipe with its large bowl is a not very obvious feminine symbol.

385

O DEWAR, give your parrot
Chains in her ears to wear.

386

DEWAR, as I was drawing water
My nose-ring fell into the stream
And a fish has carried it away
I fall at your feet
Throw your hook into the stream.

387

WITHOUT oil
Without haldi
The young girl
Lies with her boy.

388

A TOY cart must have its child
A peg must have its tethering-rope
A village must have its headman on his horse
A house must have a girl.

389

THE koel calls *kuhi kuhi*
O koel may your caste be burnt
For you, koel, I spread a bed
Where were you hiding all night?

390

THE booth is made of saja and sarai
 Green bamboos are spread above
 The seven sisters clean the court
 How shining is the water-girl.

391

THEY come from the hills
 The dwellers in the hills
 The thief comes from the stream
 The cows and buffaloes are loosed
 But the shed is stolen.

This is a riddle-song, to which the answer is 'Bees and a honey-comb.'

392

CUT fifty bundles of grass with your sickle
 And in the road make a little hut
 So as I go by I can get a glimpse of you
 For in your big house
 Your heart does not beat
 And your eyes are hard
 I fold my hands, my love
 Give me one word of love.

A poor girl is pictured as in love with a rich youth living in a big house where he forgets her and which she cannot approach.

CRADLE SONGS

CRADLE SONGS

CRADLE songs, like songs of mourning, are generally improvised, but a few tender and charming little songs are standardized. The following is intended to make the child understand, and so go to sleep.

393

*Hiroli hiroli wo dāi so jāy so jāy wo
Kon māre kon gāri de wo lādhaitin tola nindi āwe wo
Kāhe kha rothās dāi kāhe kha rothās wo
Ninduli kha rothās bachhiya ninduli kha rothās wo
Ninduli pathoi de wo ramhula ninduli pathoi de wo.*

*Hiroli, hiroli, mother. Sleep O sleep
Who would beat you, who would abuse you?
My darling, let sleep come to you
Why are you crying, mother, why are you crying?
For his dear little sleep my calf is crying
Let Ramhula bring him his dear little sleep.*

Ramhula is the name of an old Ahir grandmother, famous for singing babies to sleep. The word 'mother' in the song is addressed to the child. This is a common practice; even a grown-up man may be addressed as mother by an old woman.

394

*Are lallu bārobir tohe bulāwe jamuna ke tir
Roti tāti tāti pakāyo jema dārau ghi
Chār kawar khāle re bāro more judehi jiv
Tig dig tig dig konda roti khāy khāy
Bābu nachai jhāy jhāy.*

*Lallu, my warrior child,
They have called you to Jamna bank
I will cook hot hot bread and pour on the ghee
Eat four morsels and I will be happy
Tig dig tig dig, eating the bread of chaff
My baby dances jhāy jhāy.*

395

THE swing goes to and fro my baby
Among the mango branches
Your father has gone away
With his laden bullocks, little son
Your mother has become
The she-cobra of the ant-hill
The swing is going to and fro
Among the mango branches.

There is a story behind this song. Long ago there lived an old widow who had an only son. He took service with a Lamana and was always away on long tours with his bullocks. He married a very beautiful girl. A few days after the marriage the boy had to go away on his master's business. As soon as he had gone his mother turned the young wife and her little brother out of the house. They made a little hut of leaves under the mango tree and stayed there in miserable poverty. The girl was pregnant and when the child was born she sent her brother to get the necessary ceremonial food from her mother-in-law. The old woman prepared rice and curry of a cobra, cutting it up into small pieces so that it would look like fish. She put this into leaf-cups and sent it on the boy's head. Rai Gidhni, the vulture, came swooping down from the sky and carried away all the food from on the boy's head except one little bit of rice that stuck to his hair. When he reached the hut the girl was greatly concerned and said, 'Let's see if Rai Gidhni has hurt your head'. As she was examining it she saw the scrap of rice and was so hungry that she ate it. Immediately the strong poison of the cobra turned her legs into the tail of a she-cobra and she found herself a woman in the upper part of her body and from her waist downwards a snake. She went to live in an ant-hill near by and used to come out to feed her child and then glide back to the ant-hill. In her absence her little brother would swing the child to and fro and sing this song.

396

O Lallu, my baby Lallu
First you were the royal goat
Then you were the royal grindstone

Then you became the parrot
 And after that you were *lāl-bhāji*
 O Lallu, my baby Lallu.

The story to which this song refers is that a Gond woman once gave birth to a she-goat and a girl together and then died. The husband married again and the step-mother was so cruel to the little girl that in order to keep her alive the she-goat had to feed her with its own milk. When the step-mother saw what was happening she killed the goat and ate it, but before it died the goat said, 'Bury my bones inside the house'. They did so and the next morning the little girl found a new grindstone above the place where the goat's bones were buried and this stone fed her every day with flour. When the step-mother discovered this, she broke it and threw it under a mango tree. The next morning the little girl found a parrot sitting on the branches and throwing down mangoes for her to eat. The step-mother then killed the parrot and threw its body into the garden. The next day the little girl found such delicious *lāl-bhāji* growing all over the garden that she picked some and took it to the Rani. The Rani ate it and at once became pregnant and in due time was delivered of a splendid boy. But when he was born he cried and cried and nothing could stop him until the Rani sent for the little girl who sang the above song. The child was then happy and the Rani adopted the girl as her own.

397

HURRO hurro, my father
 Your daddy's organ is as big as this
 Your mother's organ is like a buffalo's
 Hurro hurro.

398

THIS fellow cleans twelve cowsheds
 This fellow sweeps twelve courtyards
 This fellow fills twelve great big pots
 This fellow husks twelve measures of rice
 But this old man just sits and warms himself by the
 fireside
 Move the fire old man for a cart is coming.
Kutu lulululu.

This is a song of the forefingers and the thumb. Each

of the hard-working fellows are one of the fingers and the old man is the thumb. When the singer gets to the thumb part she bends it over and imitates the old man pulling his fire (which is in an earthen pot) out of the way. For the cart she makes her fingers crawl up the baby's arm into his arm-pit where she tickles him saying *Kutu lulululu*.

399

BABY had four cowries
 I bought salt with them
 I made my cows lick the salt
 The cows gave milk
 The milk was made into khir
 And baby ate the khir
 What baby left father ate
 What father left mother ate
 Take care children
 Don't sneeze or fart
 Baby's going for his marriage
Diggi dola diggi dola
 There goes his litter.

400

O BABY, let little sleep come
 Let it come to baby
 What is the plough made of?
 What is the nail made of?
 The plough is made of sarai
 The nail is made of harra
 Don't cry baby
 Sleep is coming baby
 Don't cry baby don't cry
 Sleep is coming baby.
 Son, put your plough down by the wall
 And come to play with your child
 I can't take him grannie
 Give him to his mother
 Who will give him milk
 But his mother can't take him
 For she has gone to catch fish in the pond
 Tie him to my back
 His mother asked me to look after him

Don't cry baby don't cry
 Sleep is coming baby.
 I'll give you *bāsi* in curds
 Don't cry baby don't cry
 Tie him properly auntie
 Or his father will abuse you
 Don't cry baby don't cry
 Your mother has gone to work in the field
 Don't cry baby don't cry
 I'll give you gram to eat
 Don't cry baby don't cry
 I'll put you in a swing
 Don't cry baby don't cry
 Sleep is coming baby.

401

Are are little brother
Tilil tilil sounds the flute
 Sleep sleep to your heart's content
 But a mouse will steal your nappy
 And when you wake up
 You'll hold your head and cry.

402

SILLY baby, I'm not going to smack you
 I will feed you on *bāsi* and swing you to and fro
 Till sleep is spun into you
 Let me husk the rice, baby
 Let me prepare the kodai
 Let me go to pick *bhāji*
 Let me kindle the fire in the hearth
 Your father's coming, little son
 He will give me *gāli*
 I must make the water hot
 For when your father comes
 He will want to bathe
 Sleep, sleep, little son
 Let sleep be spun into you.

Tola nindri to bhānjai, 'Let sleep be spun into you!'
Bhānjna is the word used for spinning rope.

403

THE cradle blossoms
Its flower is beautiful
Its red fruit shines.

404

Nanna re nanna re bhaiya
Nanna re nanna re
I was cooking beans
And I found a plait of hair
I was cooking rice
And I kicked someone by mistake
I was plastering the wall
And I pushed someone by mistake
The boy goes in a litter
And he brings back a bride.

This is a Tamadna Game—*tamadna* means 'to explore with the fingers'. The mother pulls the hair and pushes and tickles the child according to the words of the song.

405

MOTHER Moon, bless baby
Let him live a hundred thousand years
Moon give him milk and *bāsi*
Let it come swaying this way
Let it come swaying that way
And straight into baby's mouth.

This song gets its point from its contrasts: the distant moon and the little child, the few months of life and the hundred thousand years, the food coming like an elephant and going straight into baby's mouth. The last three lines in the original are:

De re chanda dudh bāsi
Hālat āwe dolat jāwe
Bābu ke muh ma guṇ le.

406

Lutu lutu are a little baby's ears
While his mother is straining rice
He puts out the leaves for dinner.

The first line runs—

Nān kān tura ke lutu lutu kān.

—which is soothing enough to make any child stop crying.

407

MOTHER, mother, give me salt and *bāsi*
O my fat little baby
Let me cook the curry first.

Phodalla tura, meaning a fat or tubby little baby.

408

SWING baby swing
And you'll soon go to sleep
Your mother's going to the bazaar
She'll bring you *lye* and *phuta*
Your mother's going to the forest
She'll bring you sihar seeds.

Lye, or parched gram, and *phuta*, or 'puffed rice', with sihar seeds, are the simple and readily available luxuries of aboriginal India.

409

WHO would beat you, baby?
Swing swing in your cradle.
I am going for water
I'll give you oil
I'll give you scented oil
Swing swing in your cradle.
What widow's eye has caught you
That you cry so much?
Swing swing in your cradle.

SONGS OF MARRIED LIFE

RELATIONS

410

BETWEEN the nanand and the bhawaj
What a happy bond there is
There is none like it anywhere
For a while we have been parted
And I feel like crying
When I remember her.

The relationship between a girl and her husband's younger sister are particularly intimate and tender. A young wife is a stranger in her husband's house; everyone is very critical; she is being tested and criticized all the time; she generally is nervous and afraid of the new family. But two people, beside her husband, console her. One is her dewar, the husband's younger brother, with whom she has every right to a romantic and humorous connection; the other is her nanand, the younger sister who is probably unmarried and a favourite in the house, and to whom she can turn for support and confidences. The bhawaj in turn is specially affectionate to her nanand and helps her in her love-adventures. Unhappily, this pleasant relationship does not often survive the nanand's marriage. The nanand now goes to live elsewhere, and her visits are—in the opinion of her brother's wife—an economic burden. See No. 412.

411

HER long cloth sweeps the ground
My husband's young sister
Her silken jacket tightens
About her swelling breasts
When will I be taken to my lord?
She asks her elder brother's wife
She says, Let Phagun come
Then we'll sell the bullock and send you to him
O the girl's clothes are now so long
They sweep the ground.

Here the young girl, who was married in her pre-pubertal

period, is now so mature that she has begun to wear a long sari instead of a mere child's loin-cloth and she is longing for the day of her ceremonial *gawan* when she will be sent to live with her husband.

412

THE house was tall as a palace
And its face was towards the sun
I said to the watchman, O watchman
Show me my brother's house
But even as I spoke the door was banged
My brother heard about it and came from his court
O sister, come to my house
But I said, O brother I'll not go there
Where the door was banged against me
But he forced her to come home and his wife said
My husband's sister, it was done in fun
For we have the right to joke together.

The idea of this song is that a girl who was married as a child comes to her brother's house to arrange the marriage of her son to his daughter. The brother is an important man and his wife is against the match and shuts the door against the visitor. When her husband rebukes her she excuses herself by pointing out that she stands in a joking relationship to her nanand and that she meant nothing by it.

413

LAST week the maina hopped about the court
Last week she sat in the threshold
Today she has flown away
The cat in the house
Became a tiger of the jungle
And carried her away.

The cat of the house is the husband's younger brother, the dewar, who has a special right to the affections of his bhauji. The maina is the elder brother's younger wife and the idea of the poem is that wearying of a polygamous household she has run away with the younger brother—an act not approved by tribal sentiment.

414

THE koel sings on the mango branch
In the forest calls the peacock
Love, do not be angry
For I am your dewar
While I was with you
You were always busy working
But just as I am going away
You have begun to love me.

415

YES I will come
For here is my samdhi
And I must meet him
The buffaloes' udders are swelling with milk
Let them swell
For today I must talk to my samdhi
The baby at the breast complains
Let it complain
For today I must talk to my samdhi.

The samdhi are the parents-in-law of a man's child and have an important place in his domestic, social and religious life, as he has in their's. Among people where the cross-cousin marriage is so common, a woman's samdhi is very often her own brother and his visit to her house is a notable and exciting occasion. This poem describes how the duties of every day are neglected for the visitor.

416

COOL is the shade of the pipal
By the path that leads up the hill
Cool is the marriage haldi
But how should I fetch it from another's house
When my own house is empty?
Return, father, the money you have earned for me
Bring a boy here and marry me to him.

This Karma is about a girl who is the only child in her parents' house. There is no son in the family and so she says that her parents should not accept bride-price for her

but they should bring her future husband to live with them
as a Lamsena.

417

Who will pay for the milk I gave you?
Who now will help you on your way?

My father will help me on my way
I will pay for the milk you gave me
But let me go, mother, do let me go
To my wife's country.

What is your father-in-law's country like?
What sort of man is he?

There are many mango trees
But few tamarinds
It is a land of flowing water
My mother-in-law is a holy shrine
My father-in-law is Ganges and Jamna.

For ten months I held you in my womb
Yet you never praised me so
For four days you stayed with your father-in-law
And yet you praise him so.

Let me go, mother, let me go
To my wife's country.

GRANDMOTHER AND GRAND-DAUGHTER

THE relations between an old man and his grand-daughter (both actual and classificatory) are tender and humorous. Marriage between them is permitted and in rare cases occurs, but any old man addresses the little girl as his wife, his bride, his lover, and is licensed to make any kind of joke about it. Grandmother and grand-daughter are thus 'co-wives' and they too get a lot of fun out of their relationship, which is based on the idea that they are 'sisters': it is, of course, quite in order for a man to marry his wife's younger sister. The following songs illustrate this.

418

CHILD, come and eat a bit of bread.

No, grannie, your grandson will see me
Just now he gave me *gāli*.

Come, child, I'll tell you something
Someone told me something and I don't mind telling you
Jhalmalia gave me this ring for you.

No, grannie, your grandson will ask me
Where did you get that ring?
And whatever will I say?

No, hide the ring until bazaar day
Then bring it out and say
I've brought it home from the bazaar.

419

WIDOW, giver of sorrow, go to your husband's house
What are you doing here?
Wanton, you will count ten husbands
Your beauty is displayed to the whole world
Bring a broken litter and we'll bid you farewell
Go to your husband's house
Take a broken basket, we'll fill it with leaves
Send for two or four old women
And we'll bid you farewell.

The grandmother is speaking, jokingly, to the child pretending that they are co-wives and that she is very jealous. A girl is carried in a litter to her husband's house and presents are given in a basket—hence the allusions here.

420

DON'T scold me, grannie
I can't bear this rice-gruel
I want some *kudai*
Some *dallia-pej* and *khichri*.

Three months have gone, child
There are no signs yet
If it is a boy
In five months you'll know
If it is a girl
In four months it quivers *bog big*
Don't go much to the bazaar
There are ghosts along the road.

One of the few songs (in this area) about pregnancy. The quickening is generally expected in five months if there is a boy, in four if it is a girl.

TRYING TO GET MARRIED

421

CHILDREN of four mothers
Have gone to play together
But I can't play alone, mother
I don't know how to play alone.

This rather curious Karma is ostensibly the complaint of an unwanted child, but it may refer to an unmarried girl who sees all her childhood companions married and gone to play in their homes while she herself is left alone.

422

O ho hai! In the middle of the path
Is a creeper heavy with gourds
I have searched in every creeper
Every creeper, but I have found nothing.

A Lahaki Karma describing the difficulty of a young man unable to get a wife. In every creeper, which represents the village sprawling on its hill, there are many gourds or girls. A gourd is a favourite symbol of a girl and the people sometimes speak of the *tuma-dudh* or the breasts that are like gourds.

423

WERE you living in the peopled world
Your daughter would have had her fill
Of lovers seeking her
But dwelling in this barren field
Your daughter sits alone.

This Karma song describes the feelings of a girl who cannot get married because her parents are either living away from the rest of the village or perhaps in a village of people of another tribe. It is quite common to find a single Gond household in the midst of a community of Baiga or one Par-dhan family in a large Gond village. Under such circumstances it is difficult for a girl to find a husband of her own choice.

424

Buy me a cloth to wear
Worth one rupee at least
It was that you should care for me
That I made you my yoke-fellow.

So poor are many of the singers of these songs that it is not unusual for a husband to be unable to give his wife a new sari for at least a year or so after marriage.

HUSBAND AND WIFE

THE following Dadaria songs reflect the feelings of girls married to elderly men, though the third song appears rather to show the unhappiness of a boy whose parents have married him to a much older woman.

425

A FOOL goes to buy guavas in the bazaar
Your husband is an old man; how much longer will he live?

426

THE young girl makes her bed
Weeping she spreads the rags
And waits for the old man who cannot content her.

427

Do not kill me with false hopes
We all go to the bazaar
They buy bangles for their loves
Their loves are young and beautiful
But mine is old
We cut tall bamboo poles
But sometimes they are thin and useless.

428

DON'T give me food
But give me delight
Let me play with you
Let me play in your court
Let me play in your lap
I am only a blue colt
How can I let you tie me?
You have made a cot
But the strings are loose
You say you love me
But you don't come near me.

Sometimes when a man is married to a very young girl,

he takes another wife for the period of the girl's immaturity. This song is intended to picture the awakening love of the maturing girl who finds it difficult to divert the attention of her husband from the older woman.

429

WHY do you doubt me?
 I was only playing the drum
 Like all the rest
 If I have betrayed you
 You may drown me in water
 Like a bucket in the well
 If I have betrayed you
 Henceforth my wheels will run with yours
 As the cart runs on the road.

Here a husband is defending himself against his wife's jealousy. The conduct of husbands as they beat their drums in the Karma is often the subject of acid comment from their wives. On this occasion the man says that henceforth the wheels of his life will run as smoothly along with hers as a cart runs on the road.

430

My *jori*, my *jori*
 Take me with you, my *jāwar-jori*
 Make me your companion
 On your new journey
 Where will I find you again?
 My *jori*, my *jori*
 The memory of your words
 Impales my heart
 My *jori*, my *jori*.

It is not possible to translate adequately the words *jori* meaning yoke-fellow, friend, ally and above all husband or wife, and *jāwar-jori*, which means in this context a friend of the same age, sharing the same interests and delights.

The reference to the impalement of the heart is connected in the minds of these people with the punishments inflicted by the Moghals on their prisoners whom they sometimes impaled on stakes.

431

O ho re ho! Sweet is the mango and the tamarind
Sweet is the sugar-cane
But sweetest of all is your own yoke-fellow
Who shares the throne with you.

The mango and other fruits are often used to describe women friends. The *āma-dudh* or mango-breasts are very much admired. The word we have translated yoke-fellow is *jori* which is often used both for a lover who expects an attachment to become permanent or for a husband and wife. A *jori* is something definitely more than a casual attraction. It is the person in whose company one will pull the heavy plough of life.

432

YOUR husband dances on your breasts
And your lover dances in your eyes
Send him messages
Send all over the village
Begging him to come
But there is no news of him.

433

THE man you marry lasts you all your life
But those who secretly break through the fence
Will only stay so long as they get something.

434

BEND it as you will
The cut bamboo
Why then seek favour
From another's love.

Once the bamboo is cut and belongs to a man he can do what he likes with it. So once a woman is married and belongs to her husband he can bend her as he desires. In the song a wife reminds her husband of this and points out that when he has a bamboo to bend at his will, what need is there of seeking other pleasures?

435

SIT on a seat and braid your hair
May your mother's house burn down
Who has given me this fate?
Put oil in an earthen pot
And sitting sitting my fair wife
Part your hair properly
May your mother's house burn down.

436

WALKING walking walking
My feet are worn to shreds
Working working working
My life is turned to dust
But look at my life, my girl
How happily she sits at home.

These two songs illustrate the feelings of an over-worked husband who believes, probably quite wrongly, that he is doing all the work and his wife merely wasting her time at home.

THE POLYGAMOUS HOME

437

EVEN without your calling me
Would I not come to see you?
When the fruit is ripe
The parrot nods and signs
But the girl with oval face
Gets angry with me
Fie on the *thak thak*
Of fighting buffaloes
Fie on the angry glances
Of a pair of wives
They sleep apart on the white white sheets
While I spend a night of sorrow.

This is a Karma song about the relations between two co-wives. It is addressed apparently to the elder wife who is the parrot signing to the singer to visit her. His younger wife, the girl with the slim figure and oval face, is angry. The *thak thak* represents the noise made by the clashing horns of two buffaloes when they fight.

438

RUST destroys the wheat
She has destroyed your love for me
How I long to cover you
As the moon is hid by clouds
How I long to take you
All to myself
As a mother takes her child.

The elder of two wives, whose love for her husband has survived his venture into polygamy, is the supposed singer of this song.

439

COULD I remove the stones from the river?
 Could I steal the beauty from your face?
 Could a silver ring turn into copper?
 Another's wife cannot content you
 For she is brief as the twilight
 I will hide you, hide your very name
 So I may have you ever for myself.

Here again it is the wife who sings, but in this case her husband has not married again, but is unfaithful. The desire, rather pathetically revealed in both these songs, to possess a man completely is characteristic of Gond and Pardhan women.

440

FINE clothes have come for you
 From your new wife's father
 Put them on, put them on
 My splendid bridegroom
 What a picture you will be
 A wedding crown has come for you
 From your new wife's father
 Put it on, put it on
 My splendid bridegroom
 What a picture you will be
 A fine red turban has come for you
 From your new wife's father
 Put it on, put it on
 My splendid bridegroom
 What a picture you will be.

This is the song of a jealous elder wife whose husband is essaying the dangerous adventure of polygamy. *Hajāri dulha kya chhāpa lāgi re*. The husband, literally, is fine as a photograph (*chhāpa*) or probably a coloured print of Krishna. *Hajāri* is a word used in both flattery and derision. It can mean 'son of a thousand fathers' or 'son of a marriage that cost a thousand rupees'.

STERILITY

441

YOUR red skirt swings *lahang-luhung*
The parting of your hair
Is red like the centipede
Like a red bead is your husband
Has not your red flower blossomed?
How is there still no fruit?
Your legs are strong as pillars
And shine like yellow haldi
Your hair smells of ajawain
The incense of your cloves
Fills the world
Has not your red flower blossomed?
How is there still no fruit?

This song, addressed to a beautiful but still childless girl, is full of fertility symbols. The 'blossoming of the red flower' is the onset of menstruation; the fruit is a child. The pillars are perhaps the poles of the marriage-booth; the haldi is the yellow paste with which bride and bridegroom are anointed. Ajawain and cloves are often used at the time of a woman's delivery. For the colour-symbolism, see No. 180.

442

Do not cultivate a barren field
Or your bullocks will die
Your bullocks will sit useless
Do not marry a barren girl
Do not, do not
For her life goes to waste.
Marry a good and fruitful girl
Who will bear a son.

FERTILITY

443

O MOTHER, do not again give me a woman's birth
From the beginning there is great suffering for women
O Mother, in the shadow of the twelfth year
My head was found defiled and soon I was pregnant
The first month is over, Mother
The blood gathers drop by drop
The second month is over, Mother
In the shadow of the third month
My body is yellow as haldi
And I long for buttermilk
My hands and feet are heavy as earth
I cannot bear the sun
O Mother, do not again give me a woman's birth
The fourth month is over, Mother
In the fifth month the life comes *phud phud*
My body feels lighter than before
In the shadow of the sixth month
My body begins to look big
My mind thinks, what shall I eat
And what shall I avoid?
But to no one can I tell my desire
The seventh month is over, Mother
The child born in the seventh month
Can hardly live
The child born in the eighth month
Is sure to die
Under the shadow of the ninth month
The children of all the world are born.

Songs about fertility and pregnancy are common among the Kavar, but are rather unusual among the Gond and Pardhan. W. G. Archer gives an interesting Uraon song about 'the carving of the eight parts', the development of the body after its conception by the parents.

Image image image, babu
Image of a face with hair
When was the carving of the eight parts?
Of the father its creation
Of the mother was its birth
Out of the future were the eight parts.

444

KOEL, why do you look so downcast?
Why did you go to my nest?
What knife did you use to cut the cord?
What pot did you use to bathe?
I cut the cord with a golden knife
I bathed in a silver pot.

This song is addressed by a crow to a koel (the Indian cuckoo) which has laid an egg in her nest. The Pardhan attitude to the cuckoo is more sympathetic than that common in Europe; she is regarded as rather pathetic because she cannot hatch her own eggs and rear her own chicks. The knife and the bathing-pot are part of the usual apparatus of human birth.

EXCOMMUNICATION

THESE three songs are concerned with the danger of excommunication from tribal privileges which is the penalty of those who allow their affections to stray outside the circle of their own tribe or caste. In the first song the condition of being excommunicate is symbolized by old age. The girl who is content to play and dance in her parents' kingdom and to marry according to their wishes is happy, but by following her own will she finds nothing but sorrow. In the second song we see how a Gond girl who married a Dhobi failed to find happiness. In the third a youth is proposing to a girl of another caste that she should run away with him.

445

OLD age has come, my head is shaking
Sitting on a stool my mind repents too late
I have no mother now, no brother and no family
No one will take me into their home
Sitting on a stool I think
Too late, I think again
Life has become sorrow
More than can be borne
O earth, break open and take me in.
In my parents' kingdom
I played and danced
But in my own kingdom there is sorrow
O earth, break open and take me in.

446

I DREAMED about the Anjni bazaar
I saw a boy wearing a red-bordered cloth
And a tightly-tied turban
I could not love my own caste and blood
So I got this Dhobi's son
But however low your caste may be
There's nothing like your own
However spotless is the moon
It cannot turn night to day.

447

My Rani, how long are we to meet
In dried-up rivulets
How long is this life of theft to last?
The Raja will fine us cowries
The tribe will demand a feast of rice
But take my hand and we'll settle it afterwards
Put on your ornaments and we'll arrange it afterwards
We go to catch fish
And we get a tortoise
I'll give them a calf, and if that is not enough
I'll give them money.

Compare Herrick—

And must we part, because some say,
Loud is our love, and loose our play,
And more than well becomes the day?
Alas for pitty! and for us
Most innocent, and injur'd thus.
Had we kept close, or play'd within,
Suspition now had been the sinne,
And shame had follow'd long ere this,
T'ave plagu'd, what now unpunisht is.

448

A CROW has caught the parrot
Save it with your charms
There are spies who watch the parrot
There are guards who watch it
Save it with your charms.

It is possible that this song means that a girl, symbolized as usual as a parrot, is in danger of being outcasted and the other members of the tribe, the spies and guards, are going to penalize her for her association with the crow, probably a man of another tribe.

449

My sinful life burns
My eyes shed water
O God, who made her beauty
Make an image of her
And give it to me
My love is far away
I stand on the bank of Jamna
Now it will be hard to meet her
Now chains have been fastened on my feet
O God, who made her beauty
Give me her beauty's image.

This song apparently describes a man who has been out-casted and who has gone, as the custom is sometimes, to Allahabad for purification on the banks of the Ganges or Jamna. His girl was evidently of another and probably inferior tribe and he reflects how hard it will be, now that the chains of caste are re-fastened on his feet, to meet her again.

450

YOUR new bride
Has a black jacket
And a black bag
But why is the Raja
Looking so miserable?

A man's former lover is taunting him. He has given his new wife everything she wants, but he himself has got nothing out of it.

451

WITHOUT my love I am defeated
My life keeps on thinking thinking
I cooked little gram-cakes for him
I made a dish of finest rice
His mother is nursing the baby
His little sister is fetching water
His elder sister is serving food
But her mind is full of him
Without my love I am defeated.

In this Karma we have a picture of a girl whose husband has eloped and probably gone to the Tea Gardens. The wife is in despair, but the whole household is trying to keep up appearances and to go on with their ordinary work until all hope of his return is lost.

452

GIRL, what do I understand?
I am but a witless boy
What do I understand?
I have brought fish
Make it into curry
Tell my child's mother
Not to be sad
For I am but a witless boy
What do I understand?

This is one of those highly condensed Karma which can hardly be understood apart from the commentary of those who sing it. It is said to describe a youth so young that he is unable to bear the responsibilities of marriage, just able to bring a little fish for the day's meal but knowing nothing of life and then he suddenly finds that he has a baby to look after and all a father's duties.

453

No one stands by in trouble
For everyone is afraid
Even if it be a slender girl
Standing frightened
And tears falling from her dark eyes.

This Karma probably describes a scene where the police are arresting a girl's husband and no one dares come forward to help her for fear that they too will get into trouble.

454

How young I was
When I planted the mango
And the tamarind
And still their leaves are full of life
But there is none in my old body.

It is considered both meritorious and exciting to plant trees. The Gond or Pardhan who does this generally has a great desire to perpetuate his name, and looks forward to a prosperous old age. In the poem the old man who planted mango and tamarind trees in his youth finds himself jealous of the vigour of their fresh green leaves and compares it to the lack of strength and life in his own limbs.

MOURNING SONGS

MOURNING SONGS

THE thought of change and decay, of death and mortality is constantly present to the aboriginal mind. Life is short, 'it lasts only for two days' and every child is familiar with the sight of death and the melancholy ritual of the disposal of the body. It is curious how often sententious songs about the transitoriness of life and the loneliness of death are sung to the gayest Karma dance tunes and movements.

After this life of two days is passed
We must travel onward alone.

Again and again the gay children swinging to and fro
in the rhythm of the dance foretell the day when,

On my chest grass will grow
My bones will burn like jungle wood
And my hair like jungle grass.

They delight in reflecting how this warm and breathing
loveliness of human flesh will pass away—

455

WHAT is man's body? It is a spark from the fire
It meets water and it is put out.
What is man's body? It is a bit of straw
It meets fire and it is burnt.
What is man's body? It is a bubble of water
Broken by the wind.

The real mourning of the aboriginal, however, is to be found in the often beautiful and moving spontaneous poems that are sung by the bereaved husband and wife, parent or child, on the day of a loved one's death. Such songs are not, of course, altogether spontaneous. As for love-making, so for death, there is a great reservoir of poetic clichés on which the singer can draw, rearranging his material to suit the circumstances. But often, too, where grief is deep and genuine—as it usually is—the singer produces from the strength of intense emotion some beautiful images and ideas.

456

My little son
Where have they hidden you?
My little son
Have they put you behind the grain-bin?
Have they hidden you down in the wheat-field?
Have they taken you to the forest
And covered you with leaves?
O where have they hidden you
My little son?

457

My father
Where have you flown away, my father?
Where will I see you again?
Whom will I call father now?
Who will care for your orphan boy and girl?
You have left us alone in Banbrinda
Where are you hiding?
Who will live in your house?
How suddenly you orphaned us.
Where are you hiding
My father?

458

My son, while you lived I was a queen
For you lay between my breasts
As on a royal throne
But now you are dead
I must lay you
In the hard ground.

459

So long as my lord breathed
I lived upon the throne
But since he died
How worthless are my bangles
And the world is empty.

The song of a widow. A woman's bangles are broken after her husband's death and sometimes thrown into his grave.

460

O THEY will carry you away, and your soul will weep.

The hammer says, Listen, O Agaria, do not make me
 Tomorrow or the day after you will die
 And then who will use me to strike the iron?
 O they will carry you away, and your soul will weep.

The pick says, Listen, O Agaria, do not make me
 Tomorrow or the day after you will die
 And I shall be used to dig your grave
 O they will carry you away, and your soul will weep.

461

THE depths of sorrow in tears have not been measured
 The mountains and the hills will pass away
 Like flooded rivers and streams, tears may flow
 But what your destiny has given you must accept
 Brother, were I a tear-drop I would fall like flooded waters
 For the deep limits of sorrow's tears are not yet found.

462

SHE is very beautiful
 But her young breasts are fallen
 He fondles them no longer
 That once were his loved playthings
 Youth passes quickly, quickly
 But a girl's youth endures
 The shortest time of all.

Compare Daniel's poem beginning 'Enjoy thy April now',
 and especially the stanza—

Fair is the lily, fair
 The rose, of flowers the eye;
 Both wither in the air,
 Their beauteous colours die:
 And so at length shall lie
 Deprived of former grace,
 The lilies of thy breasts, the roses of thy face.

463

TAKE a golden comb
Bathe in shining water
Look at your body in the glass
The body is made of earth
It will be mingled with earth again
Were it made of bell-metal
You could change it for another
Were it made of copper
You could change it for another
But no man can change
His earthen body.

464

WHEN they take the body from the village
The place is lonely
We give it company to the burial-ground
The goose flies on alone
You gathered stones
And made a palace
People said, He has a house
But the house was not yours
The house was not mine
Our stay here is like a bird's flight.

465

KEEP your body well
There is great sadness for the body
The good man's body is taken in a chariot
The wicked man's body is dragged on the ground
Not even the vultures eat it
There is great sadness for the body.

466

BRING a sickle. Bring a knife
Cut fifty bundles of grass
Build a little hut in the middle of the road
Do not worry about your body
Tear your cloth and make it into paper
Take kajal from your eyes and make it into ink.

467

WHERE has your diamond-body gone?
As a child games delighted you
You danced and played in the open air
Then you came in and ate what you desired
Childhood passed and youth came
Love filled your eyes
And carried away the memory of home
Youth passed and old age came
Your skin withered and you reaped
The fruit of youth.

468

THE singhan brinjal is chopped to pieces
The marigold has fallen on the ground
Now no one looks at them
The marigold has fallen on the ground.

The singhan brinjal is considered very beautiful, but once it is cut up for dinner no one looks at it. The marigold, especially when it is in the hair of a girl, is very charming but once it falls to the ground it is of no account.

469

My sinful life is filled with misery
Where should it seek comfort?
For the house is no more a home for me
And the village is bare as a hill.

470

ASK no questions of your sadness
For that spoils your life.
In your mind why do you ponder?
Why search through your memory?
Do not think, do not remember
Ask no questions of your sadness
For that ruins your life.

471

SHE goes with her pot for water
But who can tell the sorrow of her heart?

SONGS OF CRAFT AND LABOUR

SONGS OF CRAFT AND LABOUR

THE Gond and Pardhan are accustomed to singing any of their usual songs, even dance songs like the Karma, while they are at work. A girl may, for example, sing any one of the songs included under the heading of 'Love Songs' in this book while she is husking rice or grinding wheat. There are, however, a few songs which refer specifically to household tasks, village industries and the work of the fields, and we give specimens of these in this Section.

The first group of songs, which are used by women while they husk rice or the smaller millets with the long heavy pestle in a mortar buried in the ground, celebrate the virtues of the winnowing-fan, the broom and the rice-pounder. The winnowing-fan is everywhere associated with magic. In the Maikal Hills it is used by the Gunia for divination. Sticks taken from a broom are also used for the same magic purpose, and there is generally an idea that the broom sweeps poverty and disease out of the house. Brooms are collected and taken to the boundary at ceremonies for the purification of a village.

The rice-husker also has magical significance. It is waved round the heads of bride and bridegroom during a marriage. Crooke has an interesting note on its use. 'In Bengal, it is worshipped when the child is first fed with grain. And there is a regular worship of it in the month of Baisakh, or May. The top is smeared with red lead, anointed with oil, and offerings of rice and holy durva grass are made to it. The worship has even been provided with a Brahmanical legend. A Guru once ordered his disciple to pronounce the word *Dhenk* at least one hundred and eight times a day. Narada Muni was so pleased with his devotion, as he is the patron deity of the rice-pounder, that he paid him a visit riding on one, and carried off his votary to heaven.'¹

¹ W. Crooke, ii, 191.

SONGS SUNG DURING THE HUSKING OF RICE

472

RICE-HUSKER, rice-husker, you are the wisest of us all
Were you not here how would our lovely wives
Prepare the rice for food?
Of what is the rice-husker made, of what is the mortar?
Of gold is the rice-husker, of silver is the mortar.
Who does the pounding, who sifts the grain below?
The Raja does the pounding, the Rani sifts the grain.

This song describes the husking of rice with the hand-husker where a man or woman pounds the grain with a heavy wooden implement into the mortar set in the ground, Here the man is represented as husking while his wife sits sweeping back with her hands into the hole the grain that has been thrown out by the husker.

473

I AM the fan the fan
If you could not clean the grain
You might husk for ever
But without my help you would get nothing
Dhok dhik dhok dhik
I am the broom the broom
You may clean and sift the grain
But if I don't gather it
You will get nothing
Dhok dhik dhok dhik.

During this song, whose refrain represents the noise made by the heavy husker which is worked by feet, a boy lies on his face pretending to be the husker. First he raises his feet up and down, then his buttocks and then his head. While he does this a woman goes round and round him fanning him with a winnowing-fan.

474

SLEEP comes easily
When you've enjoyed your supper
But when I don't talk to my bird
I lie awake weeping
The mango flowers against the sky
If I catch you
I'll keep you carefully
You catch fish with a net
But only in a girl
Can your life live always
How can I shake the mango branch?
For you are standing
In another's garden, my beloved.

475

O THE water of the well
And your pot by the well
How they envy you and me
Stand a little way away
From far your friend
Helps you in drawing water
Afar afar your watcher watches you.

476

ARE you going to husk the rice?
Or are you going to stay all day
Stuck by the pillar?
Golden is the flower in the river-bed
Pick it and go to your house
You must husk the rice so well
That there is no rubbish left
And the rice is not broken
Or are you going to stay idle
Standing by the pillar?

477

THE mortar quivers, down the pestle comes
O beautiful pestle
If I were not here, I the winnowing fan
How would your pretty wife clean the grain?

If I were not here, I the broom
How would your pretty wife clear the floor?
If I were not here, I the measure
How would your pretty wife measure the grain?
If I were not here, I the pestle
How would your pretty wife husk the rice?
If I were not here, I the pot
How would your pretty wife cook the grain?
The mortar quivers, down the pestle comes
O beautiful pestle.

478

O LOVELY pestle, even Krishna dances
When my love is husking grain
Pestle, you are wisest of all
Were you not here
How would we husk our beautiful grain?
Winnowing-fan, you are wisest of all
Were you not here
How would we winnow our beautiful grain?
Measure, you are wisest of all
Were you not here
How would we measure our beautiful grain?
O lovely pestle, even Krishna dances
When my love is husking grain.

479

KODAI, all the world desires you
There is no pulse like rahar dal
There is no grain like kodai
With a little ghee on top.
Kodai, all the world desires you
The poor eat you
The rich eat you
You keep the whole world healthy
Without you the world would perish
Kodai, all the world desires you.

480

RICE says, I am the wealth of man
I am their golden stick with silver point.

Says Kodon, I am born in a field
That is easy to prepare.

Rahar Pulse says, I am but a little shrub
Yet I drive away man's sadness.

Castor tree says, They all think me lazy
Yet I make their torches burn.

Masur Pulse says, I am ugly on the stalk
But undress me and see how beautiful I am.

The Beans say, We are scattered all about
But our master will collect us.

Sesamum says, I am very little
Yet I climb the head
And do the parting of the hair.

Arsi says, I look bald
Yet they fry their cakes in my oil.

481

In the middle of our garden
There is a grove of mangoes
My uncle and my brother
Have come to visit me there
Go, my husband, with a bundle of tobacco
I stand to watch them in my door
How often I come to the door
To watch them on any excuse
In my garden is an elephant
How proud they will be to see it.

In this Grinding Song a girl imagines her uncle and brother have come to visit her and thus relieve the monotony of work in her husband's house, where she is under the rule of not always sympathetic parents-in-law. These visits of relatives are of great importance and give constant delight in the rather uneventful course of village life.

482

I AM husking kutki
I am husking kodon
I am husking mahua, sister
I am going to give my husband
Mahua sweets, sister.

I am grinding rice
I am grinding urid
Mixing them with oil
I will make bread, sister
There's a marriage in the village
I'm going there to give them bread.

WEEDING SONGS

483

THE goodwife had twelve ploughmen and twelve girls to weed for her.

Tari nāke nāna wo sāsake tari nāke nāno wo.

'What rice should I cook, mother-in-law, what curry should I prepare?

Will you warm the child while I cook, for he is crying.'

'What? I warm your child, daughter-in-law?

I would rather care for any other baby.'

'Come, baby, I will warm you, for you are the real master Of the twelve ploughmen and the twelve weeding girls.'

She takes the baby in her arms. 'Don't cry baby, don't cry.'

But while she warms the baby and feeds it with her milk, It grows very late, and the men will be hungry.

'Take him, mother-in-law, while I cook the rice.'

When she hears this the goodwife begins to quarrel,

'Are you the only woman in the world with a child?'

'Don't cry baby, I'll swing you in the cradle,

Let your grannie give gali; I'll swing you to and fro.'

She cleans the house with cow-dung; she burnishes the pots; Down to the well she goes for water.

'Do swing the child, mother-in-law, I am going for water.'

She brings one load, she brings two loads,

Seven pots above each other,

And one below her arm.

But as she comes the maiden weeps in her mind;

In tears she lights the fire;

As it burns up she puts the water on to boil.

'What shall I cook, mother-in-law?'

'Make three-quarters of a seer of pej

And a pinch of vegetable, daughter-in-law.'

'But there are twelve ploughmen and twelve weeding girls How will this suffice them?'

She puts half a paili of rice, she prepares half a paili of pej;
She puts it on the fire to cook in the pan;
She goes to the garden to pick the vegetable.
She brings a pinch of vegetable between her two fingers;
She puts it on the fire to cook in the pan.
That pinch between her fingers fills the pan;
The half paili of pej fills the pot;
The half paili of rice fills the dauri basket.

When it is ready the girl sits down to make the leaf-cups;
With bits of bamboo she stitches the leaf-plates.
'Don't cry, baby, don't cry.' She feeds him with her milk.
'I am going to give pej to the twelve ploughmen
And the twelve weeding girls. Don't cry, baby, any more.'

She soothes him to sleep and puts him in the cradle;
She takes down the basket with her ornaments and cloth;
She puts on all her ornaments and the parrot-braided sari.
Splendid in her ornaments she goes to the fields.
Her tears falling *dar dar*, she goes to Kajli Kachhar.
She walks one kos, she walks two kos
Like the bright sun, she goes shining *luk luk*.

She has reached Kajli Kachhar where the twelve ploughmen
are,
And the twelve girls are weeding in the field.
'Come, come, father-in-law and drink your pej.'
'Daughter-in-law, you have brought pej, but where is the
water?'

There is water in a cocoon, she puts it on the ground.

'Daughter-in-law, with this we can't even rinse our mouths.'
Seeing the cocoon, the ploughmen grew angry.
'There are twelve of us, how can this suffice?'
But father-in-law began to bathe in the water
And the water was not finished.
All the twelve bathed, but the water was not finished.
She fed them all, but there was no rice or pej for her.

She thinks in her mind and asks herself,
'O mother, if I go home there will be no food there for me.'
Through hunger she is swaying *larang tarang*.
She picks up her pots and goes to the deep pool of the Koeli
River.

When she reaches the bank she weeps loudly.
'O mother river, I will die here, I will not go home.'

Devour me, deep pool of Koeli, make food of me.'
'Go home, daughter, go home', says the deep pool of Koeli.

'There is torment in the house, there are endless quarrels,
mother.

I will die here, I will not go home.'

She enters the water up to her ankles, but the water runs
from her.

She enters the river to the waist. 'O mother, devour me.'
Slowly slowly the maiden goes till the water is to her head.

Bearing her golden pot, she goes below the water.

Now she is drowned and sees the Water Maiden.

The Water Maiden makes her sit on a golden stool.

'Why have you come here, grand-daughter?'

In the fields the husband feels his eye twitching.

'Father, why is my eye twitching? What sorrow is on its
way to us?

O elder brother, look to the bullocks, I am going home.'

All the other ploughmen and the women came home.

'Mother, where is your daughter-in-law?'

'She said she was going to her mother's house;

She took you the pei, but she has not come back.'

The Raja went to the swing and took up his child.

'Son, where has your mother gone? Mother, it's dark now.

The child will not stay with anyone. How will we spend
the night?'

'Sleep, baby, your father will go to find your mother.'

He dressed and took the road to her mother's house.

He went one kos, he went two kos.

As he goes his tears fall like gold to the ground.

Weeping and singing he crosses hills and mountains.

One mind was weeping, the other two minds were weeping.

He reached his sasural. As his mother-in-law saw him
coming,

She came out with a pot of water and a dish to wash his
feet.

'My darling son-in-law, my father, has come. I will wash
his feet.'

Nari na ke nāna re beta nari na ke nāna re.

After washing his feet, the Rani gave him a stool;

She gave him a hookah of tobacco. 'Smoke this, my son.

Is my daughter well? Give me a message from my grandson'.

As she asked he began to cry, his tears fell *dhar dhar*.
The mother-in-law began to weep with him.

'When I went to my mother and asked her where her daughter-in-law was,

She told me she had come to her mother's house,
But my child is weeping, all night I held him in my arms.
At last I put him to sleep and now I've come to you.'

'Son, first eat your food and then we'll find my daughter.'
'Until we search for her, I will not take my food.'

'When you find her, son, don't beat her or be angry.
Please her and be nice to her, take her to your house.
How often I told her, my pearl, not to leave your house.
O my pearl, why did you not mind my word?
Inside me my heart is weeping, father, it is going to break.'

The Raja touched the feet of his mother-in-law and she
kissed him,

And said, 'Live for age after age my son, live for a hundred
thousand years

And may your turban be eternal.'

He leaves the village, soon he has reached the forest.
He walks one kos, he walks two kos, but his eyes are blind
with hunger.

He has left the right path and begins to wander through
the jungle.

The Raja stumbles over stumps and stones.

The throne of the gods begins to tremble in the sky,

'Go go, Divine Wind, and search the earth, for someone is
in trouble.'

The Divine Wind came down to earth *sur sur*.

She searched village after village, she looked in one, she
looked in another.

She saw the weeping child with drooping face.

She turned to the path leading to the jungle.

Were she a human being how long the way would take!

But in one minute the Wind has reached the jungle,

Where the Raja had wandered now eight days and nine
nights.

The Wind saw his trouble and returned to Bhagavan.

When he heard what had happened, Bhagavan with stick
in hand began to climb down to earth.
In a moment he reached the Raja in the jungle.
Tari na ke nāna re dāda tari na ke nāna ho.

Bhagavan stood in front of the Raja and asked him,
'What place do you come from? Tell me, brother. I will
be the guru and you the chela.'

'Father, my eyes cannot see. How can I be your chela?
But if I find my yoke-fellow, the next morning I will become
your chela.'

Bhagavan gave him the water of life to drink.

'Now my eyes are open, father. I will never leave you.'

'Come to the lake my son and there I will speak a mantra
in your ear.'

I will be the father, and you will be my son.'

In front went Bhagavan, behind walked the Raja.

Bhagavan took him to the deep pool of Koeli.

By the edge of the water they sat and Bhagavan cried,
'Here is my blessing. Come out, come out, my pearl, for
your son is crying.'

Your little son is weeping, Motin, I will speak a mantra
in your ear.'

Motin was sitting on a golden stool and weeping tears of
gold.

'Motin, your husband from childhood might have died
As he fell over the rocks in the jungle.'

Weeping the girl came from the water with the aid of a
rope.

'Farewell, farewell, sister of the water, you have saved my
life.'

Through the deep waters Motin came.

When he saw her the husband began to weep *dhar dhar*.

She saluted Bhagavan and he asked her,

'What sadness has befallen you?' And so she told her
story.

'You will have no more trouble, Motin.

Hereafter there will be maidens to care for you,

In a golden swing they will rock you to and fro.

Seven maids will swing you, Motin, seven maids will swing
you.

Seven maids will do your work for you.'

'But is my baby living or no, my father?'

Bhagavan gives her in a bottle the water of life.

'Let him drink this daughter, for greater folk have drunk
and lived again.'

So saying the God began to disappear and when she turned
he was no longer there.

With five saris Jal Kaina has come out of the water and
gives the Raja a golden stool to sit on.

'Live in peace, brother, my little sister had come to see
me.

Go go, my little sister, for your baby must be weeping.'

As Motin touched the feet of Jal Kaina, she said,

'Live long, daughter, come again to see me.'

Her body turned to silver and her hair to gold.

Motin took her saris and went with her pot carried on her
head,

She walked behind her Raja.

They walked one kos, they walked two kos, and at last they
reached their house.

When mother-in-law saw her she began to give her gali.

'Why have you brought her to my house, my son,

This untouchable girl who had run away?'

But Motin took no notice and went straight to her baby.

As she tried to take him from the swing, the child seemed
dead.

It lay with teeth clenched and the mother wept loudly.

'Why did I not die instead of you, my child?'

She forced open his mouth and poured the water of life down
his throat.

At once the child opened its eyes and began to cry *mutur*
mutur.

Motin took the child in her lap and gave him her breast,

But when mother-in-law saw it she came with a stick.

'This witch, this devil, my son, you have sought and
brought back home.'

She gave her one blow, she gave two blows.

The son was watching, he took out his sword;

He rushed at her and cut her neck

As if he were offering her in sacrifice.

On one side lay the head, on the other lay the body.

The girl saw it and thought, 'O mother-in-law,

You have been sacrificed for my sake.'

She took the head and body and tried to put them together.
She made her drink the sacred water.

The old woman revived, saying '*Rame Rame*.'

I did not understand, my daughter, and that was why I beat you.'

She kisses her, holding her face between her hands.

Now she goes to her son and kisses him.

'Go go, my son, and bring maid-servants for her.

Such a daughter-in-law I have never seen in all the world.

Make her sit in a golden swing and swing her to and fro.'

Mother-in-law went out and brought seven maid-servants for her.

They used to swing her to and fro. Another seven did all the work of the house.

The old woman took her grandson in her arms and carried him.

'O son, because of you I have had this happiness.'

She used to go dancing from place to place.

With hot and cold water the servants bathed the girl;

And after bathing she would wear the sari given by Jal Kaina.

When she put on that sari, the whole house was filled with light,

And that mud house was turned to gold.

Daughter and son sat together to eat from a golden dish.

When she had had her food they took her to the swing.

She took her child with her and rocked him in the swing.

As they were happy, so may happiness be ours!

The close connexion between folk-tale and folk-song, between 'poetry' and 'prose' is illustrated by the fact that in many folk-tales the dialogue is in verse and is sung by the narrator. A number of songs also are based on the folk-tales and cannot be understood apart from them. The following Weeding Song sung by women during the heavy task of clearing the rice-fields of weeds during the rains depends on the story of Banelin.

484

ALAS, alas, O Goddess, what misfortune has brought me here?
 Standing in the field Banelin weeps.
 At home mother-in-law torments me,
 At home my sisters-in-law abuse me,
 In the jungle my husband bullies me.
 Alas, alas, O Goddess.
 For twelve years have I cleared away the cow-dung,
 But mother-in-law is never pleased,
 Sister-in-law is never pleased,
 Husband is never pleased.
 They snatch the dung out of my hands
 And beat me with it.
 Standing in the field Banelin weeps.
 For twelve years I have swept the yard,
 But they snatch the broom out of my hands
 And beat me with it.
 For twelve years I have brought water for the house
 But they snatch away my gundri
 And beat me with it.
 Standing in the field Banelin weeps.

The scene now changes from the field to the well and Banelin is pictured standing by the well and asking the animals whether they are as unhappy as she.

O Bhuli, are you a happy dog
 Or do you live in sorrow?
 Banelin, all night I must keep watch
 And all day long I go to hunt.
 O Duda, are you a happy bullock
 Or do you live in sorrow?
 Banelin, all day I am at the plough
 And all night long
 I must work the Teli's oil-press.

The story behind this song is of a girl from a town who has married a poor husbandman in a village. Her parents give her a dog, Bhuli, and a hornless bullock, Duda. After living a miserable life in the unfamiliar surroundings of the village, exposed to the hostility of her mother-in-law and the impatience of her husband, the girl runs away with her dog and her bullock. After a time they reach a city where a Dano has devoured the inhabitants and has collected in his palace all the gold and silver and precious stones of the place. He looks after a great herd of cows and spends his time turning over his possessions. Banelin reaches the city and hides.

That night the Dano has cooked rice and pulse and Bhuli goes and steals it. The next night the Dano prepares khir and Duda goes and steals it. After several days, finding his supper disappearing every evening the Dano gets very angry and decides that his right hand must have stolen the rice and eaten it and his left hand must have stolen the khir and eaten it. In a temper he heats a great pot of oil and punishes his two hands by plunging them into it. Then he accuses each part of his body in turn, puts it into the boiling oil and thus slowly kills himself.

Banelin then becomes the Rani of the city and brings people from all over the world to live there. One day her husband and his family come to sell wood. She recognizes them and employs them in a menial capacity in the palace.

The women who sing the song of Banelin remember her early unhappiness and the wonderful fortune that befell her and as they sing they are said to pray that a similar happy lot may be theirs.

485

To the Ganges the fawn
Has come to drink water
Part of it was his own doing
Part was his fate
And part the common lot of men
O crow, you have spoken
Like Fortune itself
But what can I do?

This obscure song can only be understood by reference to the story on which it depends. Long ago a beautiful girl was married to a youth who lived far away across the mountains. When the marriage was over she started back with her husband to his home. As they went along they reached a flooded river on whose bank was lying the dead body of a woman. In a tree above the crows were talking to one another about the corpse. Now the girl had the gift of understanding the language of birds and she overheard the crow say, 'Inside that body there is a lovely boy. If anyone is brave enough to cut him out of the belly, he will bring good luck'. The girl was very excited at hearing this but was afraid to say anything and went on to his house with her husband. But at midnight when she thought her husband was asleep she took a knife and went secretly down to the river and began to cut open the belly of the corpse. But her husband saw her go out and followed her. What he saw filled him with terror, for he said to himself, 'My wife must be a Churelin'. He took the girl back to the house before she was able to remove the child and in the morning said that he must take her back to her home for she was too dangerous a wife for him to keep. As they were going back they came near an ant-hill and once more the girl overheard the conversation of the crows in the tree above her. 'There is a great treasure', they said, 'in this ant-hill. If anyone were to dig it up he would be rich. But this poor girl could not get the child that would bring her luck, for they said she was a Churelin; and now if she tries to get this fortune, they will surely say she is a Rakshasin.' And so it was, for though the girl heard of the treasure so near her, she did not dare tell her husband anything about it.

486

Tarina ke nāni nāna wo daiya
Tarina ke nāni nāna wo daiya
Janamina lethai, what is the story
 Of Maru of the grizzled beard?

Where is our plane, where is our chisel
 O God, where is the plough?

In the house, Maru, is the plane and chisel
 In the forest is the plough.